

Jacksonville State University



Writing Project Anthology

Summer 1995

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Writing Project
Anthology*

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*Jacksonville State University
Jacksonville, Alabama*

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Dedication

The teacher-fellows of the Jacksonville State University Writing Project, 1995, hereby dedicate this anthology to Judy Ramsey; to her staff, Donna Bailey, Jimmy Powell, Kay Ramsey; and to Debbie Owen.

Foreword

While other fellow teachers from Alabama were enjoying the "lazy days of summer" and indulging in a little "R & R," seventeen dedicated, brave souls spent countless hours in the writing process, becoming reflective practitioners.

This diverse group of elementary, secondary, and college-level teachers developed appreciation for each other by blending both personal and professional growth. Through professional research, exemplary teaching models, shared classroom techniques, and writing-response groups, these participants gained renewed zeal for teaching writing across the curriculum. These teacher-fellows also found time to explore their own creative writing interests.

This anthology highlights unique selected writings of these teacher-fellows, ranging from individual creative expressions to researched applications of the writing process. Their works are as varied as their personalities and education backgrounds.

Hopefully, through reading these pages, the reader will share the authors' mutual conviction that writing is a thought-provoking, continuous process.

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Daily Schedule

9:00-9:15	Announcements
9:15-9:30	Journal Readings
9:30-11:00	Teacher Demonstrations
11:00-12:00	Writing/Conferences
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-3:30	Response Groups (Monday, Thursday) Writing/Research (Tuesday, Wednesday)
3:30-4:00	Book Reviews/Round Table Discussions

Special Events

- July 6 Presentation--Puppet Drama
 Ken Guthrie, JSU Writing Project '88
- July 10 Presentation--"Process Writing: Theory and Method"
 and "Reading/Writing Workshop"
 Sherry Swain, Director, Writing/Thinking Project,
 Mississippi State
- Luncheon--President's Dining Room
- July 11 Alumni Refresher Day
- Workshop--Teaching Practices: How Do We Know What
 We Know, and How do We Know That We Know It?"
 Sherry Swain
- Panel Presentation--Writing Project Alumni
 "Teachers' Stories, Students' Stories: How We
 Teach, How They Learn"
- July 14 Picnic and Field Trip
 Anniston Museum of Natural History
- July 18 Potluck Lunch
- Poetry Workshop
 Susan Methvin, poet
- July 25 Sampler Day
 Teacher Demonstration--"Hats, Hats, Hats: A
 Literature-Based Creative Writing Approach for
 Any Age"
 Becky McKay, C. E. Hanna Elementary School/
 JSU Writing Project Consultant
- August 3 Graduation/Reception

HITCHCOCK PRESENTS: FROM CLUES TO MINI-STORIES

Motivating students to read and write is often a difficult assignment for teachers, especially if the students have below-average language and reading skills. By using a prewriting technique which incorporates an element of suspense, the teacher may experience success in motivating students to do both. First, briefly review the elements of the short story. Without letting students open their textbooks, show them nine words/phrases from a short story, which you have written on the board or an overhead transparency. Next, have them write a mini-story predicting what the selection will be about, using all of the words and phrases. Allow volunteers to share their stories with the class. After they have shared, let the students guess which story they think comes closest to the "real" story. Finally, read the selection orally. You will find that the students are eager to read, and they have used their creative expression to write a mini-story.

Karen Burnham

BOOK BUDDY JOURNALS

Reading and writing develop simultaneously and reinforce each other. As literacy develops, children's reading promotes and strengthens their writing. Using buddy journals provides a natural way for reading and writing to be integrated in a meaningful context. In this activity, students are paired and given reading response journals. After reading their books, buddies swap journals and respond to and converse about what they've read. Students are free to include illustrations and personal notes when making journal entries. Book Buddy Journals definitely make the reading-writing connection, and they're fun as well!

Sally Buttke

WHAT IS A META FOR?

This is a unit that was derived after I had asked my students the question--What Is A Metaphor? One of my students replied that he did not know what a meta was, much less what it was for. This is a lesson to help students understand what abstract terms are and how to develop and use metaphors and similes. Students are shown a Nike T-shirt and then asked to list all of its characteristics. Then they are asked to select an abstract word such as "justice." The students would next make a list of metaphors and similes by comparing and contrasting the abstract term "justice" to the characteristics of the T-shirt.

Once that is completed, the students are asked to write a short essay on "Justice" using at least five of the similes and metaphors they have been created. They are then reminded to think in this manner when writing so that their own written pieces might be more varied, entertaining, and creative.

Gary Davis

DIRECTIONS FOR DRAWING DESIGNS

Following and giving directions are skills that frustrate both students and adults. "Directions for Drawing Designs" is used as a culminating activity for a unit concerned with following and giving directions. Students work in pairs to create written directions for drawing a geometric design. Directions are later shared orally, with other students attempting to draw the design based on the spoken directions. This activity is helpful in any class where expository writing is taught.

Rhonda Downer

IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT WRITING THROUGH TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE

One major premise of the "Implementing Strategies" booklet was to allow tutors in a tutorial setting to utilize one-on-one conferencing and self-evaluation to fully help the student exploit the critical thinking, learning, and writing process. The student who experiences difficulties with an English assignment, for example, could be assisted with the "Implementing Strategies" booklet. One-on-one conferencing highlights a revision checklist for writing which ensures that the student knows if a paragraph or sentence has a good beginning, when sentences are clear and complete, and whether a writing situation indicates if there are more details needed. Self-evaluation allows the student, even if not in the tutorial session, to identify and determine his/her own strengths and weaknesses in paragraph development, punctuation, spelling, etc. The "Implementing Strategies" booklet was designed to assist both tutor and student in analyzing, evaluating, organizing, and revising sentences and paragraphs into grammatically correct and readable pieces. The booklet ensures that the student engages in critical thinking and problem-solving for more productive writing experiences.

Cathy Green

DESCRIPTIONS CAN BE DECEIVING

The purpose of this demonstration is to look carefully at descriptive writing. The focus will be on using sensory words, as well as including all facts. A picture of an alien will be drawn by each student. The student's drawing will be used to create a descriptive paper. Once papers are completed, the student will exchange his writing with a partner and attempt to draw a picture of the alien described. After completion of partner's drawing, discussion will allow students to look at facts they may have left out and specifics they needed to include. Allowing students to create their own pictures transfers the ownership of their writing. This personalization of writing seems to aid in motivating and creating better descriptive writing.

Rhonda Hammett

WRITING OBITUARIES

In this demonstration, students write obituaries for given objects; therefore, this creative writing exercise integrates newspaper study, summary writing, paragraph writing, and figurative language usage. When creative writing is used as the bridge between illustrative examples and the process of writing, creative writing assignments provide an opportunity for students to utilize aspects of language, explore their own voice, and gain confidence in their writing style.

Connie Holmes

FRACTURED FAIRY TALES

Writing group fairy tales is an enjoyable task that can be easily assessed for content. Since fairy tales are familiar to all students, a different way to present the genre is what could be called "Fractured Fairy Tales." Divide the students into small groups. Give each group two fairy tale titles and four contemporary words, phrases, or brand names. The students will incorporate the characters from these stories and these new words into a brand new fairy tale. Give each student a story starter page. Have the group members plan the plot of the story. Then each student writes his or her part of the story on his or her page. This is the draft for a big book. When the stories are complete, have the students use poster board and large art paper to create a big book. Each student should write and illustrate his or her page of the story. The entire group should work together to illustrate the cover. Other related lessons include illumination and calligraphy.

Robin Jennings

GIVE YOURSELF A HAND

The "Give Yourself a Hand" lesson is used to promote positive communication skills and adjective usage among students. The students work in pairs to give and receive positive feedback. In pairs, the students share positive adjectives about each other. They trace their hands and write those adjectives inside the hand. Individual descriptive/informative positive essays are written by each student, using these adjectives. Learning takes place through peer evaluation with positive feedback. The students learn to view themselves, each other, and their writing positively.

Britt Johnson

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Biographical sketches are a good way to begin the school year. Not only do the students get acquainted with one another in a non-threatening environment, but they also sharpen their interview skills, utilize sequential/chronological thinking, hone nonfiction writing techniques, and build one another's self-esteem. Have each student bring three personal objects to class for sharing with a partner. Assign writing partners and have students list facts known about their partners. Have "show-and-tell" with objects; then, interview each other, using five questions generated to round out information gathered already. Write biographical sketches of partners and read to class. This is a great "opener" for the school year, especially if the teacher participates!

Debbie Kipp

COLLECTING OUR THOUGHTS: RESPONDING TO LITERATURE IN A JOURNAL

A response journal is a journal in which students write their responses to the literature they read. These responses could include positive/negative reactions to the works or even teacher/student-generated questions. Some possible assignments consist of letters to characters, obituaries, interviews, suicide notes, news accounts, psychiatrists' reports, diary entries of a character, or even drawings and doodles. Students will need looseleaf paper, a folder, and a pencil. This activity demands that students actively read the assigned selections. Ownership of learning shifts from teacher to student, allowing students to discover the reading and writing connection.

Ellen Lacey

SHAKESPEARE--THE MYSTERY UNRAVELS: USING CREATIVE WRITING TO PRESENT THEME INTERPRETATION

The demonstration presented ways to allow for personal interpretation in a multi-faceted subject field of a Shakespearean work. Fellows were asked to give an account of their favorite Shakespearean character and that character's reaction to meeting four Writing Project Participants in the Bahamas. The demonstration helped to illustrate how creative writing helps eliminate students' fears concerning the language Shakespeare uses. In addition, the demonstration employed ways to narrow focus in interpreting meaning.

Tonja McCurdy

USING THE SENSES TO WRITE HAIKU

Students often cringe at the thought of writing poetry. Introducing them to the haiku is an easy way to bring them into the poetry realm. Activities using the senses will enhance their thought processes and give them ideas. Several activities, such as tasting varieties of foods, listening to music, or going on a nature walk, can generate thoughts and lead to creative images described within their poetry. Not only do they learn the history of the haiku, but they also study the different types of prewriting, as well as poetry as a writing device.

Traci Shaw

HATCHER

"Hatcher" is a series of activities joined to encourage children to write creatively. The lessons include reading children's books, writing short stories, publishing final drafts, and cooking "Noodle Nests." Actively involving students in each of these lessons proves to be an excellent motivation tool. The key to great writing is to pique a student's interest, and "Hatcher" does just that!

Shannon Smith

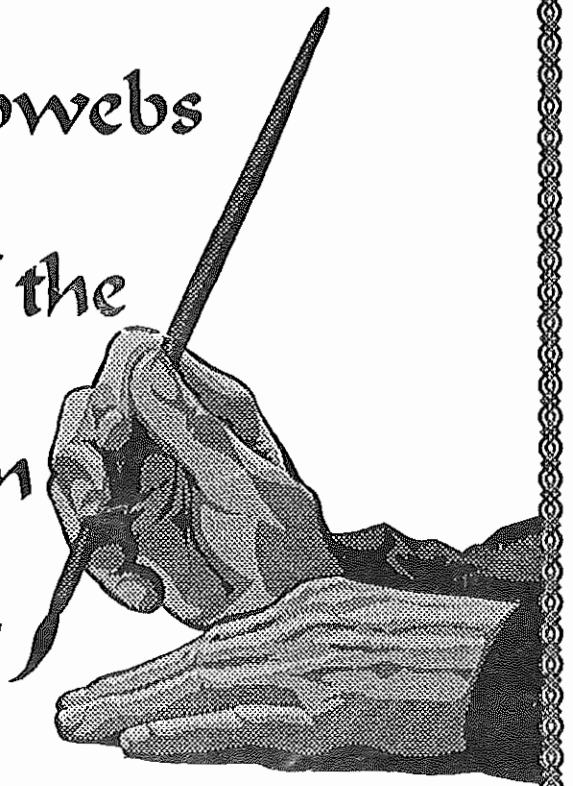
MAKE IT SO

One way to promote interest in a genre such as science fiction is to give an overview using clips of films that show the works of several authors. My demonstration included a brief history of science fiction, with several clips from SCI-FI T.V. shows and movies. The activity included writing dialogue, either in prose, drama, or a comic strip form, about meeting an alien from another world.

Barbara Wynn

Karen Burnham

"Writing is like a broom
that sweeps the cobwebs
from the corners of the
brain to make room
for more cobwebs."



Hitchcock Presents: From Clues to Mini-Stories

After experiencing difficulty in getting my seniors motivated to read and write, I decided to try a Write-Before-You-Read journal activity suggested in the teacher's edition as an introduction to the short story "A Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl. It proved to be an enjoyable activity for my students, and most of them were eager to do the assignment and share their resulting mini-stories.

I started by writing on the board the following nine key words and/or phrases from the selection before the students came into the classroom:

warm, clean home	drinks	violence
policeman	a shock	detectives
pregnant wife	leg of lamb	weapon

As soon as they were seated, I told them that the nine words were taken from the next selection that we would read and, by using all nine words, they were to write a type of mini-story telling what they thought the story was about. They were not to open their textbooks during this assignment. Before they began, I briefly reviewed the elements of a short story.

A few students read over the list of words and immediately began to write without asking any questions. Other began to make verbal predictions as to what the story was

about instead of writing; still others sat there looking perplexed as if waiting for further instructions. I told them just to predict in story form what they thought would happen in the story and not to worry whether their prediction was correct. And, yes, I assured the lazy ones that they would be given credit for this assignment.

After giving them about fifteen or twenty minutes to work on the mini-stories, I asked for volunteers to share them with the class. Several students did so eagerly. Laughter erupted as one student read about "violence breaking out at a warm, clean home as a pregnant wife served cold drinks and a leg of lamb to her family." Another student challenged this story with his own about the "policeman arriving home to find that while his pregnant wife was eating a leg of lamb in their warm, clean home, someone had broken in, robbed her, and struck her with a weapon as he knocked the drinks off the table." Still another student attempted to top both stories with her prediction that "on the way to his warm, clean home to take his pregnant wife to the hospital, a policeman was called to a bloody scene of violence at a local restaurant where a couple eating a leg of lamb had died from poisoned drinks, and so far the detectives had found no weapon."

After most of the mini-stories had been read, I let the students guess which one they thought had come closest to the actual story. Then I told them we would read the selection to find out if they had guessed correctly. All of them were eager to read the story to see whose mini-story was the most accurate.

Although this was used only as a journal or prewriting activity for reading motivation, it could easily be developed into a creative writing assignment. The list of words could be adapted to fit any literature selection or any grade level.

One Empty Nest to Another

"Did you notice that a wren built a nest in one of your Boston ferns on the carport?" my husband asked as he sat his old gray lunchbox down routinely on the counter in the kitchen. "And there are four white-and-brown-speckled eggs in it," he added quite matter-of-factly.

"Really!" I exclaimed, feeling as if we had somehow been chosen, or set apart from all our neighbors, by this especial bird and that our lives would certainly be blessed from this experience. My husband's next words squelched this blissful thought.

"I'm going to tear her nest out, or she won't let us anywhere near the side door when her eggs hatch." His voice sounded harsh, cruel, and inconsiderate of this mother's painstaking time spent in the selection and building of a cozy home for her young ones.

"No, you can't do that!" I pleaded. "You can't just destroy her home and her eggs. Wait until she hatches her eggs, and then she will leave on her own."

Realizing he had touched a sensitive nerve, he reluctantly gave in, but quickly added as a forewarning, "You're going to regret not tearing out her nest when she starts swooping down at you every time you try to get in the house." Although I knew he was right, deep down, my heart felt for this meticulous mother bird who had taken such pains to find the perfect place for her babies to be born.

Daily I peeked from my utility-room window as the diminutive, brownish-gray mother sat on her eggs, her slender, regal-looking mate faithfully bringing her a piece of worm or a bug to sustain her. At times she would leave her post, but the least sound--the

side door opening, footsteps, voices--would bring her swooping from a nearby power line in direct flight to her nest, chirping nervously all the way.

One morning after a couple of weeks had passed, I carefully peeped from behind the voile curtain and was surprised to see four tiny heads bobbing recklessly up and down. Faint, chirping sounds emanated from their scrawny, fragile little bodies. Silently watching them, I felt an unexplainable joy well up from somewhere inside, that same feeling I had experienced as I held each of my own two children for the very first time. They, too, had been so fragile, so innocent, so unaware of anything going on around them; and they, too, had sounded so utterly helpless and afraid.

It was the astute young mother who interrupted my thoughts. Alighting seemingly out of nowhere and clutching something in her slender beak, she hovered over her newborns and pushed tiny tidbits of fleshy substance into their gaping little mouths. They eagerly welcomed the small fragments of flesh, secure in their mother's watchful care and content to have her near them.

I recalled how trusting my own babies had been, their hungry little mouths open wide, their delicate baby hands eagerly grasping the warmed bottle from my hands. Like those oblivious, dependent creatures, they snuggled close to me and innocently accepted whatever I offered them.

The days passed, and the baby wrens grew. Downy feathers covered their once-bare bodies, and they looked more like birds. Mother wren flitted back and forth,

continuing her scheduled feedings and never disappearing completely out of the sight of her young ones.

"Such a protective little mother," I thought as I observed her daily, and I contemplated my own overprotective manner toward my children throughout the years. How difficult it had been letting them spend the night away from home, leaving them at kindergarten for the first time, and reluctantly giving Jason permission to drive the family car by himself after he got his driver's license. It was just so hard to let them grow up.

Then early one morning as I gently pulled back the curtain to begin my daily surveillance of the wren family, I was startled to find that one of the birds had flown away. The other three looked so grown-up, their sleek brownish-gray bodies ready to take flight at any moment. And that morning, one by one, they each tried their newly developed, slender wings, fluttering from one tree branch to the other and chirping gleefully as they savored this brand-new facet of life. Soon they were flitting from tree to tree, and except for a few brief landings in their old nest-home, they were gone. Nothing remained but the round, twig-fashioned, empty nest which had once served as a quaint, comfortable home to the mother and her newborn wrens.

"Why did they have to leave?" I asked myself, overcome with sorrow as I viewed the empty nest. Then almost immediately, my mind reverted to a humid, late-August afternoon to a parking lot outside my son's college dormitory. Everything had already been unpacked, carried up flights of stairs, and carefully situated in drawers and on the shelves of the twelve-by-fifteen foot dorm room that Jason would share with his new

roommate. Standing next to our car, I hugged my son, giving him a few parting, motherly words as I felt my husband easing me into the car to leave. I managed a weak smile and a feeble wave as we drove off. Jason suddenly looked strangely grown-up to me.

As we left the campus that would now be home to my son, the tears streamed down my face--warm, affectionate, and uncontrollable. I felt a sharp pain deep inside that I could not explain, and no words would come. My son had grown up, ready to try his wings and soar to new heights on his own.

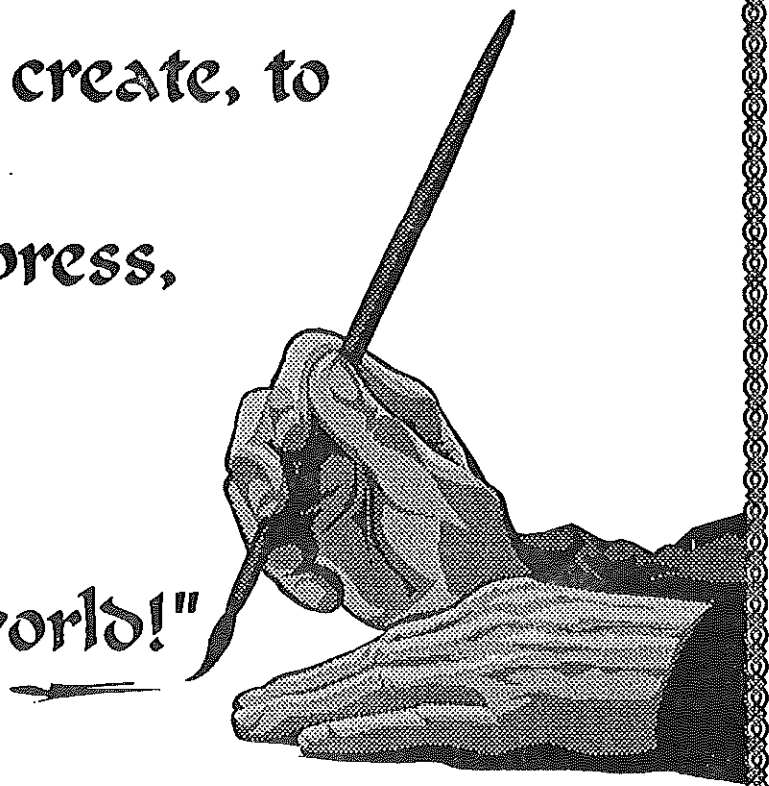
Standing at the window and staring silently at the empty nest, I thanked God that unlike the mother wren, I still had my daughter to care for and nurture. But as I stood there both admiring and pitying that wren mother, I realized that all too soon my daughter would take flight, and my cozy nest would also, like this mother's, be empty. And just before getting back to my household chores, I quietly thanked the mother bird for letting me share these last couple of weeks with her and for giving me such insightful lessons on making the most of this fleeting phenomenon known as motherhood.

Sally Buttke

"Writers possess
tremendous power!

The power to create, to
inform, to express,

and even to
change the world!"



Circle of Life

It's an almost indescribable feeling. A feeling of peace and tranquility and thankfulness for innumerable blessings and yet simultaneous panic and anxiety and grief over losses yet to come.

Someone once said to "Take the time to stop and smell the roses," but doing that requires quietness and introspection. In these moments, one faces the realities of life--the sweetness of newborn babies, the deep, soul-satisfying love of family, and the crunch of sand between toes with the taste and feel of sea spray on one's face.

And then later, oh yes, later comes. All those precious things change. Gone. Lost forever. Be it the death of a loved one or perhaps the loss of the ability to run on the beach or even go there. Change is ultimate and inescapable. Moments will slip through fingers, unable to be held or kept forever.

Someone else once said, "And this too shall pass." Meant to be a comfort for those needing reassurance of the passing of time, it holds a steadfast truth that, in reality, is quite melancholy. How then, do we learn to cherish and savor the moments that so quickly pass by?

The beach, my favorite place, is where I "feel" the most. I'm able to think uncluttered thoughts and experience the greatest harmony with God, with nature, and with myself. It was there, several years ago, as I watched my little children scamper about in the sand and splash in the ocean, that I began to realize life as it truly is--fleeting and yet surprisingly satisfying.

Life is not about clinging to bygones and living mournful of that which is being lost. It's fulfilling each moment and then letting it pass. It's cherishing each loved one and releasing them to their life and ultimately their death. It's giving and receiving equally with oneself, with others, and with God.

But paramount to peace, happiness, and satisfaction in life is the willingness to accept and embrace change. It is at that "place" where unspeakable calm and serenity can be found.

Life is like a circle--where one thing ends, another begins. It is with that truth that I am progressing in life.

I do not think happiness is just beyond my grasp--I already hold it in my hand.

The Baby Becomes My Brother

September 19, 1976

Baby Kyle balanced precariously on Mom's swollen abdomen as the room erupted with squeals of delight. Aunt Jo, smiling at the spectacle, lifted her infant son from Mom's arms. Poor Mom, she was huge.

On this Sunday afternoon we were at a baby shower for Mom. I was seven then, still quite "babyish" myself. Paige had just turned eleven, and felt very mature and important in her upcoming role as "the" big sister. She sat beside Mom, admiring the baby gifts as they were opened one by one. Deciding to check out the food, I wandered into the dining room to sample the refreshments.

"Oh, Pat, how sweet that little quilt is!" someone exclaimed as mother opened a gift. Licking some icing off my finger, I looked back to see Mom pull yet another baby quilt from the folds of pale yellow paper and pastel ribbons. I decided that this "having-a-baby" business wasn't so bad. After all, you got lots of stuff!

I ran back and attempted to sit on the arm of Mom's chair. But alas, there wasn't room--I think that I was beginning to realize the end of my "being held" days! So I sat in the floor instead and fiddled with some discarded ribbon and thought about what you'd look like and if you were a boy or girl.

October 24, 1976

Nana pulled the hot, sweetrolls from the oven and placed a few on the table in front of Paige and me. I poked the gooey, apple filling and looked over at Paige. She

wasn't very interested in her pastry either. Mom waddled into the kitchen with Dad in tow. He was carrying her bag.

"Be sweet," he said, "and obey Nana and Granddaddy!" Then they were gone.

Boy, did I feel weird. Perhaps, I sensed that life as I knew it was about to change forever!

Long after we'd gone to bed, the phone rang, startling the stillness and quiet of the night. Nana tiptoed into the room where Paige and I were sleeping. Paige poked me in the side. "Wake up, *Salad!*" she said. (I always hated it when she called me that.) Nana peeked around the door. "That was your dad--you have a baby brother, and Mommy's doing fine," Nana whispered. We jumped up, and throwing back the covers, we locked hands and bounced round and round on the bed. "We have a baby brother! Yea, yea, yea!" we sang loudly.

Later, as I lay beside Paige, who was already breathing softly and deeply asleep, I wondered again what you looked like and if Mom loved you as much as she loved Paige and me.

October 28, 1976

All day long I squirmed and wiggled in my desk. Second grade held little interest for me that day--I was finally going to meet my new baby brother!

Nana's car pulled up to the curb at school, and Paige and I hopped in. All the way home we talked and giggled with anticipation. We had waited five days to see you, and we could wait no longer. Nana had barely put the car in park before we were out and bounding up the stairs to the door. Into the kitchen, through the den, down the hall, and

into the back bedroom, we finally stood, breathless, looking down into the crib at you. My mouth fell open. I blinked and looked again. Turning to look at Paige, I saw that she wore the same expression. Mom said, "Well, what do you think, girls?"

"He isn't very cute is he?" Paige answered. I said nothing (quite unusual, I assure you). I just stood there staring. All I could think was that my new baby brother looked more like a baby bulldog! You certainly didn't resemble the Gerber baby I'd envisioned. But even so, I decided that you were beautiful, like an angel with fuzzy tufts of white-blond hair and big fat pink cheeks. Walking over to Mom, I ran my hands over the assorted baby items from the hospital; and by smelling and touching everything, I felt connected again with my mother. I had missed her a lot, and suddenly I was aware of just how much. "Isn't he precious, Sally?" Mom asked, combing back my hair with her fingers.

"Can I hold him? I'm big enough," I replied.

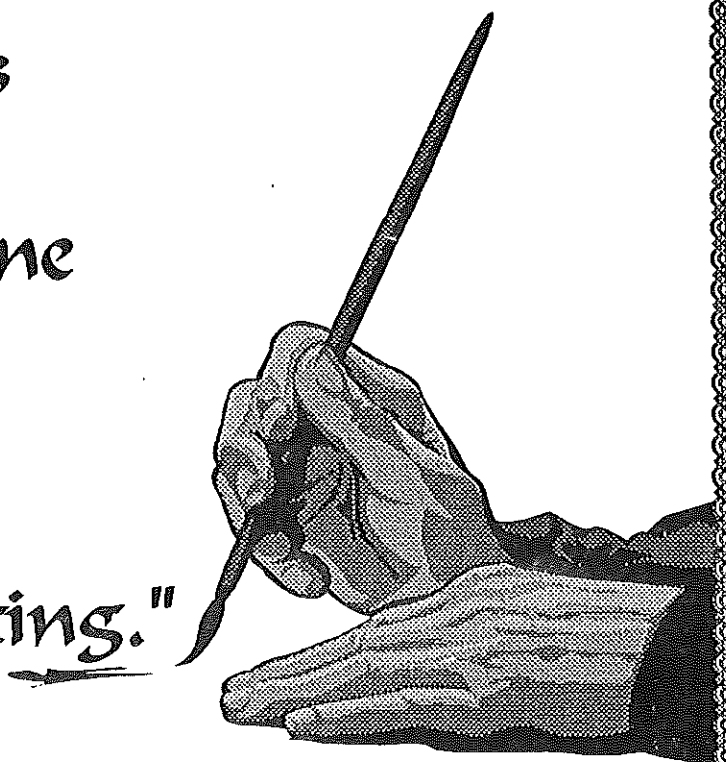
"Okay," Mom said getting up from the bed. The puff of air around her when she rose from the bed still smelled like Mom--funny how she always smelled so nice--I reassured myself that nothing had changed. She lifted the bundle from the crib, and softly we padded into the den. Hopping onto the couch, I raised my outstretched arms toward her. After what seemed an eternity and a lengthy discussion on "Baby Holding Safety," she finally placed you into my arms. She walked over and flipped on the T.V. Sesame Street was on. I don't know how long I held you or anything else that anyone said. I just remember feeling so mature and important. Every few minutes I'd look down to admire your hands or eyelashes or watch you grimace and sigh the way newborns do.

Watching Sesame Street that autumn afternoon on Nana's couch, we got acquainted. It was then and there that I decided that you were *my* baby brother, and I knew that I'd always love you.

Dedicated lovingly to Jason Matthew White, born October 24, 1976

Gary Davis

"The teacher's
enthusiasm is
the number one
motivator for
students' writing."



The Anting

Snuffy Smith appeared to be the nicest and most gentle man I had ever known. That he was my uncle seemed irrelevant. When I was a small boy, age eight-twelve years, I would always spend two weeks with him and Aunt Velma. I looked forward to those two weeks when I would eat caramel cakes and smell Prince Albert tobacco to my content. Uncle Snuffy was one of those guys who rolled his own. Every time he did, he let me help him pour the tobacco out of the tin, and he let me lick the paper to make it. I loved that smell.

Every evening after supper, about seven o'clock, Uncle Snuffy would take me with him to a local market so that he could sit around and talk for about an hour with the guys. What an enjoyable experience it was to be able to find a comfortable spot and listen to six or seven neighbors talk about anything from politics to baseball. They were always indulgent of me when I would try to chime in with what I considered to be an intelligent comment. There would usually be a smile, a pat on the head, and a "That's right, son."

One habit that Uncle Snuffy always had on these nightly visits was to pick up Joe Van on the way to the market. It was a habit that I secretly wished he would break. Joe Van (and I never did know his last name) possessed a raucous personality and seemed to be just the type of person I would have expected Snuffy to avoid. But every night, as we headed to the conversation place, he would dutifully stop, pick up Joe Van, and later deposit him at his residence on the way home.

One day I asked Uncle Snuffy if this ritual of picking up our nightly passenger was necessary. "Oh, yes," he replied. He asked me if I had noticed Vern Edwards occasionally at the market when we visited there. I sure had; who could miss him? Vern was the most repulsive individual I had ever met to that point in my life. I never heard him open his mouth when he didn't cuss and swear. Thank goodness, he never stayed for very long. I could tell that none of the nightly crowd cared much for him either, and they always expressed their relief after he had left.

Uncle Snuffy then explained that the one person Vern Edwards couldn't stand was Joe Van. The group had met nightly for several years without Vern or Joe Van. Four years ago Vern Edwards discovered the nightly gathering and decided that he would become a regular. After a few nights of enduring Vern's vulgarities, my uncle was elected to find a way out of this mess without breaking up the nightly meetings. He decided on Joe Van after reading a bird book about how blue jays and cardinals repel mites from the birds' bodies by putting ants between their feathers. Joe Van became the group's "ant" to repel Vern. Uncle Snuffy laughed and said that Joe Van was bad, but not as bad as Vern.

My Granddaddy's Smile

One of the things that I have always cherished doing was going to the cedar chest in my parents' bedroom and rummaging through the old picture albums. My favorite photo there was one of my grandmother and grandfather soon after they had married. This image has always held fascination for me because my grandparents, from the first time I could remember, were always old. But there was my grandfather, a huge smile on his face and an arm around the magnificently beautiful woman that only later was I able to identify as my grandmother. He was tall, erect (and that surprised me because for all my memory he had been stooped), with a broad forehead and shock of dark hair. What really caught my attention and intrigued me most was the look of happy surprise on that young man's face.

Years after I had first seen that photograph, I asked Granddaddy if he remembered that picture. I don't know how long it had been since he had seen it, but when he took it in his old wrinkled, arthritic hands, it was like a magical transformation. That look in his eyes, that happy surprised look from the photo, appeared on his face. Oh, how I wished I could have had a camera to capture that moment! Then tears came to his eyes, tears from a ninety-year-old man, as he described to me how he had always considered himself to be the "happiest man alive."

Grandmother had been the most beautiful young (she was nineteen at the time; he was two years her junior at seventeen) woman he had ever seen. He had flirted with her for years, always telling her that she would one day be his bride. When that special day

came, he had scared up enough nerve to ask her to marry him. She wanted to know why he had waited so long to ask! They were married two weeks later.

Both were in the nursing home when he told me that story. Grandmother was no longer able to understand anything that was being said around her, and she was incoherent when she attempted to speak. Granddaddy was in good health but had moved to the nursing home when she did so he could be there with her. With tears in his eyes, he looked down at her, squeezed her hand and said, "Momma, I'll always love you."

He looked up at me and smiled again, but this time, it was the sad smile of a worn out old man, and he said, "Always."

Sounds in the Night

Listening to classical music has become my favorite form of relaxation over the past several years. I am sure it has something to do with how the sounds of smoothness caress my nerve endings with the fingers of massage. The music puts me in a mood where mind and body seem to find a concordance possible at no other times than in deep sleep. That's where I was last night around 11 P.M.--at home in front of the stereo in that zone between total captivation and unconsciousness--when I first heard the sound. It was like a creeping in the attic, but I passed it off as just a settling of the house. I have been up late at night before and have heard sounds in the walls, in the attic, even in the floor, that ended up being nothing more than a nail loosening or what my carpenter friend called heat expansion. His explanation was that it's common and is heard more often at night because other noises are subdued.

I simply went back to my enjoyment. My wife was in the back room working on the computer and she obviously hadn't heard anything, so I went back to what I do best--relaxing. My mind had gone out of gear again when suddenly I heard the unmistakable sound of a footstep. This time there was no doubt as I heard the slide of footfall on shingle and knew that I had a burglar on my roof.

I slowly rose from my favorite chair and crept down the hall to where my wife was using the computer and asked her to quietly hand me my shotgun and shells. I guess she could see the look on my face. Was it fear or intenseness? I don't know. But, she handed me the gun and shells without question, and quietly, she followed my footsteps back up the hall toward the den where the door opened to the back porch.

There it was again! Another step! What was this guy on the roof up to? I hadn't thought to get a flashlight. Darn it! I turned to my wife and told her to go to the kitchen, get a flashlight, and call 911. By now, I was shaking in my houseshoes, but I felt that I must do something while he was still on the roof. I held him under a disadvantage as long as he had to try to keep his balance while I was on solid ground. Knowing that was the scenario, I slowly opened the back door so as to make as little noise as possible and slid on hands and knees onto and off the porch.

I jumped up, leaped into the yard, and in the same motion turned on the flashlight. The beam from the flashlight scanned the roof right into the eyes of the intruder. I was face to face with a large raccoon who was not happy with the attention, and in response, he jumped straight over my head so closely that I could smell and feel the breeze from the varmint's body. At that moment, dazed with fright and stunned by the suddenness of the coon's flight, I discharged the shotgun right into the side of the house. The animal escaped unscathed.

The next feeling was one of embarrassment and anger. Can you imagine explaining to a sheriff's deputy how you had blown a hole in the side of your house because of a raccoon? Well, that was my task. We later conjectured that the raccoon had climbed a tree next to the house and jumped onto the roof which probably had a steeper slope that the coon expected. Believe me, if you ever have what sounds like a burglar on the top of your house at night, get your gun, but keep the safety on until you see the white of his eyes. If it turns out to be a raccoon, DUCK!

You're Outta Here

I've never been one to quibble;
I've never been one to question.
But now that I'm "outta here,"
I guess I'll learn to be more docile.

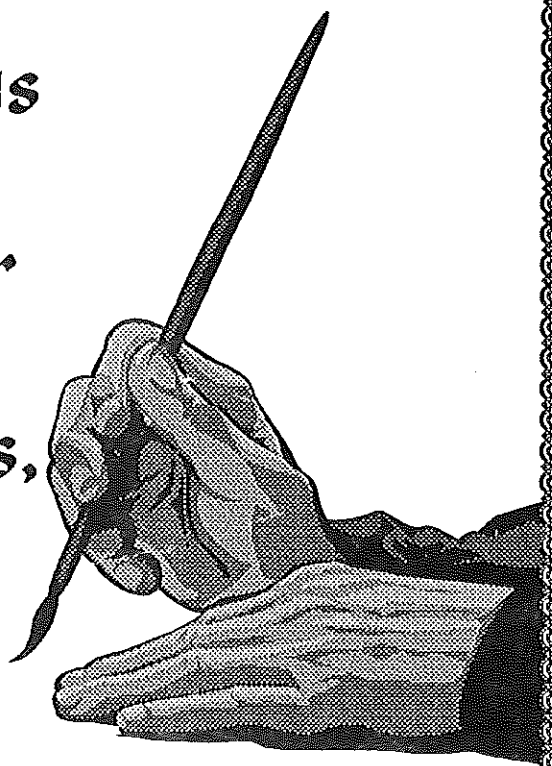
I thought my gripe was legit;
I thought I had reason to question.
But now that I'm "outta here,"
It made more sense not to argue it.

In the heat of the battle,
I thought I had reason to question.
But now that I'm "outta here,"
It was only my team I did rattle.

Hindsight they say is the clearer;
I thought I had reason to question.
But now that I'm "outta here,"
I see it's my temper I must conquer.

Rhonda Downer

"Writing allows us
to immortalize our
dreams, memories,
and thoughts."



The South Rises Again

As an undergraduate student, I attended Judson College, a lovely and refined Baptist women's college in Marion, Alabama. One would think that ladies of Judson might be socially deprived, but that was hardly the case. My friends and I made a point to know the guys of Marion Military Institute and specifically those who were members of the Morgan's Raiders--the most illustrious and highly acclaimed fraternal organization on Marion Institute's campus.

The highpoint of the social season was the annual Old South Ball. The Raiders and their dates went all out--ridiculous "azalea trail" antebellum dresses, authentic Civil War uniforms, and an incredible facade of an antebellum home built by the Raiders to be used for the formal military leadout. As for the ball itself, who cared? Time and money spent on preparation were suddenly forgotten. We simply had our pictures made, danced a token dance, and left to attend the biggest party of the year. (I don't feel that any party details are really necessary). Minutes, hours, days--everything ran together for the space of a weekend. On Sunday night, my friends and I would crash in our dorm, generally wishing we had never heard of Marion Institute, the Morgan's Raiders, or even the Civil War. But we knew that the next year would find us on the azalea trail, watching the South "rise" again

Thoughts about Writing Across the Curriculum

When I chose to write this paper about writing across the curriculum, I felt that I was automatically in favor of the concept. Why wouldn't I be? Such a program would lighten the load of the English teacher, and make me no longer the person solely responsible for teaching students to write. What I didn't take into consideration was how many doors could be opened by implementing such a program.

In his book Writing to Learn, William Zinsser comments that "it's time to redefine the 'three R's'--they should be reading, 'riting, and reasoning. Together they add up to learning" (22). In my opinion, Zinsser has summed up writing across the curriculum in one wonderful statement. Rather than teaching students to write a particular way, we should encourage students to use writing as a learning tool. Writing can be thought-provoking. It can encourage students to form opinions and provide a medium for those opinions to be expressed. It can expose students to creative possibilities they never realized were possible. Writing to learn can take the form of diaries, response journals, poetry, drama, journalism, explanations, technical writing, and any other method that requires a pen, paper, and a student's mind.

The burden in implementing a writing across the curriculum program sits primarily with the classroom teacher, regardless of grade level. Many teachers feel that creative activities which incorporate writing to learn automatically mean an increased paper load. However, I feel that assessment should be based primarily on student effort; a teacher does not need to carefully evaluate every piece of student writing line by line. I also feel that cooperation among teachers in

different disciplines is essential. We must respect each other's academic areas as we do our own.

For example, since becoming a teacher of Applied Communications, I have had the opportunity to examine writing in a variety of content areas, including technical writing. Although some have been initially foreign to me, I have come to understand and appreciate their importance. My school also offers courses in Applied Math and Applied Biology; I would like to see a program implemented to coordinate student writing in all applied classes.

The use of writing to learn develops students who are not only better writers, but also more confident thinkers. Zinsser states that "our ultimate charge is to produce broadly educated men and women with a sense of stewardship for the world they live in" (48). Students need to leave high school or college prepared to meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world. Hopefully, as educators, we can help them meet those challenges.

Works Cited

Zinsser, William. Writing to Learn. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

The Journal--A Daily Teaching Tool

When I think about methods for teaching writing in the classroom, the simple practice of having students keep a journal or portfolio stands out in my mind as one of the most beneficial. The continual and ongoing format of journal writing allows students to improve without the pressure of having every paragraph or essay turned in to be graded. However, continuity can pose a problem for teachers. I personally have found that it is sometimes difficult to constantly churn out interesting, and also motivating, entry topics. I have used a variety of techniques to avoid making my students' daily writing mundane.

One of my favorite techniques is the timed free-write. I time my students for five to ten minutes and instruct them to write as many words as they possibly can during the allotted time. At first, many can't believe that I am asking them to simply write whatever comes to mind, without worrying about grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Soon, however, most view these experiences as a competitive challenge. We count our words at the end of the free-write, and students are provided with a sense of accomplishment as their totals improve. While these free-writes are an excellent source of prewriting for more formal assignments, they also have other advantages. My students are writing and improving in a non-threatening manner, and I am provided with an excellent source of insight concerning their personalities and interests.

My classes also enjoy list-writing. Many dread and avoid persuasive and expository writing at all costs, but listing reasons or steps in a process is not so bad --

even sometimes fun! Lists are a wonderful way to generate ideas and organize thoughts for students of any age, and when a list comes first, a paragraph or essay often follows more easily.

I also enjoy using "starter" sentences with my students. One of the best sources for these I have found is Openers for English Classes, which is published by J. Weston Walch. Some of the best in this collection can be found in a section entitled "Values." These encourage creativity and personal thoughts. Whether dealing with seventh graders or seniors, I have received some of my most interesting and thought-provoking responses when using these "openers," such as "I am happiest when..." or "It makes me angry when..." One of my favorites is "I like to listen to..." When I used this topic in my seventh grade general English classes, I received the following responses:

I like to listen to my Mom's voice when I'm sick, and the sound of a friend's voice when I am upset. I like to hear my Dad saying he is proud of me...

I like to listen to my sister crying when I'm going to bed.
The rhythm of the crying sounds like music, while it is also a tender sound like a mother's voice...

Although the use of writing journals can be tedious for the teacher in terms of preparation, it still remains an excellent way for encouraging students to put pen to paper and write. My students become active writers, and they enjoy the sense of ownership and accomplishment they develop when they see their written words on a page. With improved self-esteem and confidence, the possibilities are endless.

I am . . .

An Alabamian who was born in Portsmouth, Virginia.

A sister to Duane, who is my one and only little brother.

A daughter to David and Frances, who are the best parents a girl could ever have.

An avid reader, who could spend an entire evening browsing in the bookstore.

A lover of music, who enjoys singing along with the radio in the car.

A teacher of English, who would become a figure skater in the Ice Capades if she had the ability.

A fun-loving friend who is always on hand for a road trip.

A Christian who finds comfort in the greatest Friend of all.

A person whose greatest strength is a sense of humor.

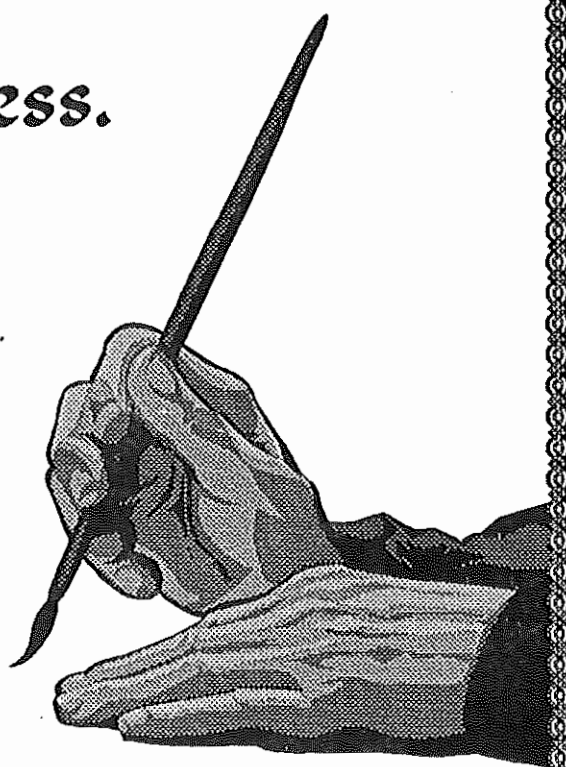
A person whose greatest weakness is impatience.

A person named Rhonda.

Cathy E. Green

"Writing is like chess.

You keep moving
until you finish or
the game is over."



July 7, 1995

Mr. Socks
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Socks:

My name is Frederick Benno Von Schnider (Benno), and I am a beautiful salt-and-pepper miniature schnauzer. As the official White House Cat, let me congratulate you on becoming the first of your breed to live with the First Family. I have always, although secretly, been an admirer of you cats who demonstrate such grace, poise, and good looks.

Mr. Socks, I am writing you because I would like to visit you very soon at the White House. I am a "house dog" who is also housebroken. I enjoy exercising, that is, running and chasing birds or small children, but I must limit my activities somewhat these days because of my age. In human years I am 77 years old.

At this point, Mr. Socks, I guess you are wondering whether or not I am a security risk. Why, with all of these strange humans running amuck, it's a wonder the dogs and cats on this planet have not been similarly affected. Well, Mr. Socks, not to worry. Neither I, nor my human family, are poor risks because, after all, we've all been loyal Democrats for years.

Now I know you would like to have answered the question that really counts: Have I ever chased a cat? Well, Mr. Socks, I have. But this was only in defense of my human family's yard. My owners hate having to pick up strewn garbage after some wayward cat or rat or any other errant, four-legged intruder. You see Mr. Socks, I am not the type of dog who goes in for that nonsense of chasing a cat just because he happens to be a cat. I assure you, I am an equal opportunity chaser.

I am looking forward to meeting you and your human family. That White House looks beautiful. I hope it is full of big, fat mice; I like to chase them too! Please contact me as soon as possible for a visit.

Sincerely to a White House Cat,

Benno

THEY RIDE HORSES, DON'T THEY?

"They ride horses, don't they?" was actually a catchy title cooked up by those clever news reporters at the *Birmingham News*. To further prove the power of the written word, this short yet engaging topic would somehow alter the course of my adult life.

The newspaper cover had beautifully photographed a lush field of green pasture just mildly singed by the summer's burning rays. On horseback and appearing to enjoy this complimentary mixture of the summer's uncompromising sun and slightly burnt grass was a woman who appeared oblivious to any of life's frivolities or cares. Something struck my mentally adventurous insides and told me that that could be me! Once I turned to the inside of the paper and found the cover story, I knew I was, as the expression goes, "hooked." How could I hope to become a horseback rider in the middle of such tranquil beauty? I found by reading the article that I had to travel to the city of Morris, Alabama, a place with which I was not familiar. Still, my mentally adventurous side said, "Go for it." I called the number listed in the article and asked if it was possible for me to visit this pasture of lushness on horseback even if I had never been on horseback. The lady I spoke with expressed great optimism for me since they also offered, in addition to a peaceful trail ride and suitable horse, horseback riding lessons for the beginner. After sincerely warning my conversant that I was a true beginner's beginner, I eagerly took down directions to get to her farm.

The directions to Morris were undeniably exact, leading me to experience the many curves and hills and dales that would supposedly lead to this idyllic site. To top off

my trip, I had one more hill to climb, followed by an entrance to a dusty, narrow road. The gated entrance must have come straight off the Hollywood backlot of some movie company, because someone had a skull and crossbones replete with an abandoned trailer so sinisterly, yet with a flair of decor, positioned. I was not to be deterred by this foreboding entrance. I had to ride a horse. I had to experience riding on that lush, fertile pasture. But, could it possibly exist?

I took the skull-and-crossboned-decorated entrance and wound around the cramped roadway. I looked up into tall trees of bone-dry, brownish-green leaves that looked more inviting to snakes than birds. Bits of sunlight played with my sunroof as well as the dust particles conjured up by the steady rolling of a solitary automobile. The roadway droned on and around one curved way of trees and then another. From left to right as far as the eye could see were thickets of dense forest almost totally obscured by the road's unyielding dust. Were those skull bones a warning not to enter this road? Had I made a costly error by taking this infrequently used passageway? Would I ever be seen or heard of again after wandering off alone in the thickets of Morris? My car suddenly hit a deep indentation in the road. It then came back to me what my grandmother always "preached." She would say, "Girl, don't you know it's not nice for a young lady to go out to an unfamiliar place alone?" As my car began to slowly whimper along following the unnerving jolt, I was more than eager to take grandmother's advice. But it was too late.

A clearing unexpectedly appeared. There was a corral containing horses that could have been at least a quarter of an acre to my left and an even larger corral to my

right--with horseback riders! A splendid red brick home was further to the left of the left corral and to the right of the corral, parking spaces. The roadway was unpaved, but not dusty like the trail I had so Spartanly undergone. I cautiously entered this most pleasing and welcoming place since I didn't want to lose my oil pan. After parking and begging my car to forgive me for all I had recently put it through, I walked over to the larger of the two corrals. I was almost immediately greeted by my trainer, a somewhat rotund but pleasant middle-aged woman. She introduced herself to me as "Gloria" and told me how happy she was that I could make it despite the hot weather. We both entered the corral where she introduced me to Jake, a 15-year-old dark chestnut-colored gelding. Jake appeared very subdued, almost what some might call "laid-back." It had occurred to me, though, that Jake was probably tired of all of us humans jumping on and off his back all day, especially in this kind of weather. Gloria assured me that Jake was an experienced horse, used to riding people, and although a little on the heavy side (a fattening 650 pounds), he was a proficient trail rider. Frankly, I was more worried about being too heavy for Jake.

We located Jake's bridle and saddle gear, and Gloria proceeded to instruct me as to how to get Jake "dressed" for the trail ride. After placing a coarse blanket on the horse's back, I hoisted Jake's hard-to-lift saddle and clumsily slapped it on his back. I wanted Jake to know that the experience was just as unpleasant for me as it must have been for him. "Jake, hold that stomach in," roared Gloria, as we pulled and tugged to get the leather strap in its buckle. Jake must have understood Gloria or all of the pulling and

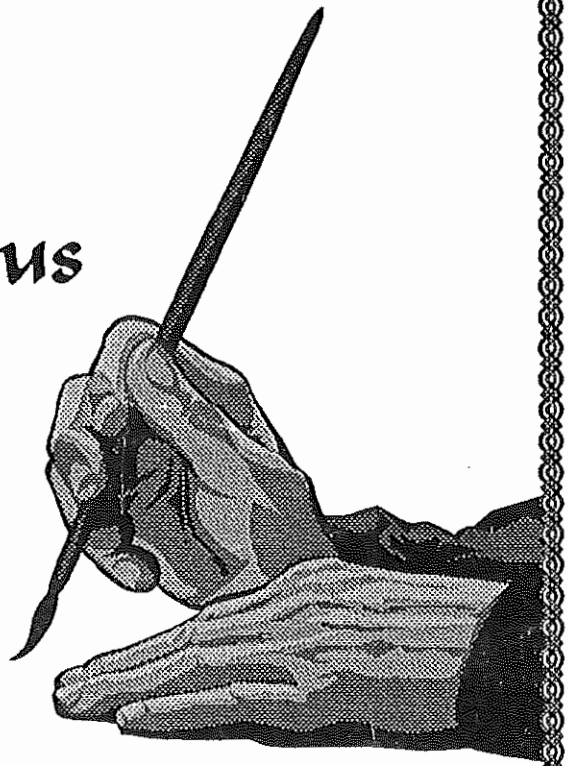
tugging because his midsection actually got small enough to fit his belt. "You've got to come off some of that weight, Jake. It gets harder to dress you everyday," insisted Gloria.

I thought I was all ready to go on the trail when Gloria told me to approach the horse from his left side, put my left foot in the stirrup, and pull on a piece of mane. When I elevated myself up and got in the saddle, I didn't realize how high up everything would appear. I couldn't stand it. I had to climb down from Jake. Gloria insisted that I relax and get accustomed to the height. I fearfully insisted I couldn't. Jake solved the problem for both of us. He began slowly moving as if to say, "Let's get this over with." I closed my eyes in terror. I knew that there were young, very young, children in the corral riding their horses effortlessly as if eating a bar of candy. I felt inadequate--no, I felt stupid--but I couldn't help it. So, with eyes closed I proceeded to ride--no, the term is "move." Jake never stopped his up and down, slow, rhythmic, yet bumpy gait. I could feel the hairs of his tail swishing, causing me to open my eyes. Immediately I felt a sense of calm. Gloria looked up at me and asked if I was all right. I told her I was fine. "But why is Jake swishing his tail?" I asked. "That is how horses chase away flies," she answered.

I thought to myself, "Thank God for flies."

Rhonda Hammett

"Writing enables us
to experience
the unthinkable."



SOUND WRITING "I Can't Write What I Haven't Seen"

Many times, when asked to write about feelings or emotions, students say they can't write about things they can't see. One lesson that will help them understand that things do not have to be visible in order to be written about, I call "Sound Writing." In this lesson, the students will focus on sounds and how they can create pictures and stories.

Students are asked to take out paper and pen. I then instruct them to write down everything they hear for a timed ten minutes. Before the time begins, I open all windows and doors in the classroom. Students may write down literal sounds or a description relating to the sound. They start writing the sounds they hear when I indicate for them to begin.

At the end of the ten-minute period, the students will be divided into groups of three or four. They will discuss the sounds they have written within their group. It is amazing to watch how sounds are replayed and described. In sharing, the students help create mental pictures, and then those pictures are used to create a short story. Each group member must contribute at least three different sounds for the story.

Students are given two days to create their stories. When the stories are completed, one person from the group reads the story to the class. We all heard basically the same sounds but created totally different stories. The diversity shown illustrates that we are all different. We discuss how the stories were created from sound rather than sight. This helps students realize that writing enables them to write about things that are

not visible and that as readers we can experience different things from the same piece of writing.

After this lesson, I'm always fascinated at how students are eager to express their ideas regarding what we read in class. I believe this not only aids in their becoming better writers but also helps students to become better readers.

Portfolios Are Needed

More and more I hear discussion going on about the need for student portfolios. When I hear these questions, I immediately want to respond, "Students need portfolios." When first introduced to portfolios, I too was skeptical. I do not easily accept things; I have to investigate to believe. After much investigation regarding student portfolios, I now see their need.

Let us first make sure we understand what the definition is of a student portfolio. Purves, Quattrini and Sullivan indicate that it is an individual creation, similar to a student's self portrait. No two portfolios are alike, nor should they be.

In creating the portfolio, students must be held accountable for its content. Students will make and justify choices about their portfolio. As they look to themselves for judgments about their strengths and limitations, the teacher will have "superVISION" over them. Teachers will assist the students in charting their progress and setting new goals.

Secondly, there is a need to discuss topics that appear in the portfolio. Some researchers suggest that students should have two portfolios--a working and a presentation portfolio. The working portfolio should contain all types of writing. Some examples would be the following:

Journal Entry

Personal Narrative

Speech

Poems

News Report

Hypothesis

Review

Reflections

Personal Response to literature

Research Paper

Résumé

Predictions

The contents of the working portfolio are unlimited. Drafts and revisions will be apparent throughout this portfolio. This portfolio will be a guide for the students while they are formulating their desired outcome.

The presentation portfolio, on the other hand, would have some organization and direction involved in its content. It should be precise in formulating the creator's desired outcome. It should contain only the best pieces and those that are relevant to the situation. Like writing, this portfolio will have a specific audience. The audience will strongly influence the portfolio's content and layout. The audience will be used as a guide in developing the process the student will follow.

Enabling the students to create portfolios will aid in developing their organizational and writing skills. It presents them with the opportunity to show the world where they have been and where they want to go.

Portfolios can be used to bridge the gap from high school to college or the workplace, allowing students to grow and change in their writing as well as in their lives. Clearly, portfolios are always changing and adjusting to new situations. Students must be able to make a transfer of their knowledge to new learning situations to achieve new outcomes.

Portfolios allow students to grow, mature, and focus on the changing needs of their lives. Portfolios are symbolic of the growth of a student. They enable students to create their own masterpiece and present it for review. As the artist, the student sculpts his path to higher achievement.

Purves, Alan C., Joseph A. Quattrini, and Christine I. Sullivan. Creating the Writing Portfolio. Lincolnwood: NTC Publishing Group, 1995.

A Mother's Love

Children grow and determine
Their own way,
But a mother's love is
Constant and here to stay.

Through heartaches
And personal disappointments,
A mother's love is like
A healing ointment.

She watches and listens
While we confide;
Her trust and knowledge
Leads and guides.

In all our failures
And success,
A mother's love
Always sees the best.

Although age may change
A mother's look,
Her love is stable and as
Solid as the "Holy Book."

The Grey World

In looking at our world
Wouldn't it be great if all things
Were black and white?
Plain and specific, all laid out,
Our problems already solved and
Already written.

In looking at our world
I believe grey is the dominant color
Grey, not easily identified or focused
Grey, with so many definitions
Grey, the blend that varies with its content.

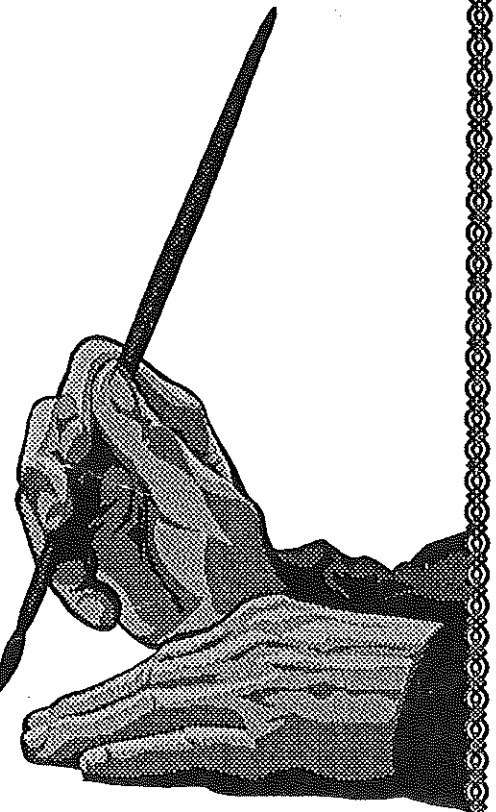
Our world, a varying grey with
So many unknowns
Where will it lead?

Connie Lynne Holmes

"Seek beauty through
the eyes of Wordsworth;

Find passion within
the heart of Keats;

Define success in
terms of Emerson's wisdom."



Flight of a Dream
(for my father)

O'er the mountain tops soaring,
quietened by the breeze;
Man never knows what comes by nature
with ease.

Striving beyond the elements to reach our place
beyond the rigorous race;
Fighting each battle, allowing only victory
to set the pace.

Living within hope of reaching
our destined goal;
Though the mind forever challenged
while the wisdom brews precious old.
Man never knows what comes by nature
with ease.

Only once sought the treasures
deemed fine;
Only once captured the sparkle
in the glimpse of an eagle's eye--
Can Man know what Nature has given him
with ease.

Portrait of Life

Painting pictures of the past
vividly highlights things that last;

Subdues the dreariness of the falls,
Shadows the writing on the walls,
drying the indelible stains of fear.

Memories etch a freshness to feelings grown old
adding warmth to hearts grown cold.

Blending warmth with the color of love
to all that's been envisioned before;
Contrasting wisdom with the learning of more.

Images, blended memories cast a hue
of hope from the past renewed.
The Artist of Life leaves the mind to recall
--the imagination that began it all.

Only Thee

When I'm with thee
 my heart beats as strong as an oak tree old;
My blood dances like a daffodil
 rejoicing in the rain;
My senses select these moments
--forever, I'll never regret.

As the brief tranquil moments shared
 make the days seem like hours few.
Time stands on end as I reminisce
 the pleasure you brought in bliss;
Though the test of time will only endure
 what blissful feelings allure
 --to my spirit and body old.

I pray days unseen will forever enchant
 a growing love that many often only dream;
 fulfilling our lives with tender cherishes and pleased peace.
The years shall glide o'er the horizon's hue
 and I, my love, will always be refreshed
 --knowing the sacred vow of bliss.

For twilight is to the morning
 as you are to my day;
Shining a light on my soul
 illuminating my life with love's glee.
My hopes and joys lie fast with thee,
 as delicate as each breath taken to whisper
 --I love thee.

If the joys of my heart were to cease
 and my body were to slumber cold;
My spirit would forever rest in lasting peace
 knowing my last breath was taken with ease,
 beside none other
 --Only Thee.

Aunt Estelle

Now that I have Aunt Estelle in memory, I can recall the smell of the delicate rose vines that encased her front porch. As soon as school was out for the summer, I would pack my suitcase and head to Aunt Estelle's for a couple of weeks. My visit with her was an annual event I always looked forward to, and now I measure these memories as I look forward to just sippin' my tea and remembering when

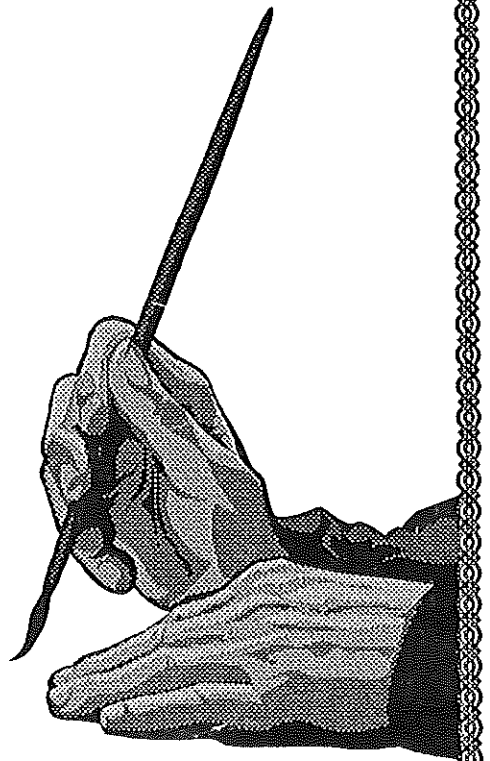
Aunt Estelle, actually my great aunt, was my favorite aunt. She was a barrel of fun, and she allowed me to do things that made me feel special and grown up. I remember her house always smelled of cinnamon roses; the breeze from the trees outside would mix the smell of roses with the cinnamon and keep the parlor cool. The fresh aroma was at its peak around midday, and I can still smell it as if I were there. I recall the joyous quality in her voice as she would call to me. "It's almost noon," she would say, and I knew it was time to have our afternoon tea. Ah! My favorite time of day. Aunt Estelle entrusted me with her fine china and allowed me to "tinker around," as she would call it, in her kitchen. I would eagerly fix a tray with the dainty porcelain teacups and place the sugar cubes and the spoons on the real cloth napkins just so, and walk as easily as I could into the parlor. As I fixed the tea, Aunt Estelle would say, "I just adore tea in the afternoon as much as I adore my little Connie-Lynne." Of course, I just glowed because she made me feel special, and over the years I grew fond of the way she pronounced my name. As soon as we began to sip our tea, I would beg her to tell me a story. "Well now, let's see," she would say, and I made myself comfortable on her enormous velveteen sofa, anticipating

another wonderful story. Hours could pass. Watching her tell the story was just as fabulous as the story itself. I remember hanging onto every word then, and even now, I still hear the tone and texture of her voice as she took much painstaking time to get every detail just right. Somehow the smell of herbal tea always made me think of those summer days, and the tales she used to tell. I remember laughing along with her till my eyes filled with tears. I always told her, "I want to be just like you, Aunt Estelle, when I grow up." And she would always laugh and say, "We'll see."

She always had a special charm about her. I had so many questions, and she tried to answer every one. Late in the afternoon, we would sing songs in front of the old pump organ. I can remember singing to the beat, and her head bobbing back and forth as her feet pumped the organ. We would sing to the top of our lungs, and it must have been plain noise to any passerby; but we sure had fun. In the midst of her head bobbing back and forth, her smile never weakened; neither did mine -- I was too excited. Even at bedtime, I somehow was always too excited to go to sleep. I wanted to hear more stories and learn more songs. Sitting up in the big four-poster bed, I would rummage through pictures and keepsakes, and read old postcards till I heard her cane tapping down the hallway as she came to tuck me in. At night she would take off her glasses, and her eyes would glow in the light from the hall. I remember asking her if she was ever afraid of the dark. I still recall her reply, "No, my dear, are you?" I laughed and told her, "I want to be just like you." I saw the tears forming in her grey-marbled eyes as she smiled and kissed me goodnight.

Gloria Horton

"I write to discover
who I am and to find
the paths I will take."



Looking Back to Move Forward

Donald Graves, in his book *Explore Poetry*, suggests a "Return to Long Ago" draft in which writers compose a poem based on a remembered object from their childhood. Graves' theory is that first writing from what we know frees up our words, better preparing us to write about what we may not know so well. Having used Graves' "Return to Long Ago" draft in my classes many times, I knew his theory worked. I therefore decided to use a variation of his idea to introduce the Short Story Unit in my freshman Introduction to Literature class.

When I had taught the short story before, I had always begun the unit with a lecture on the elements of the short story--plot, character, setting, and theme--as well as comments on purpose and style. The results had not been earth-shattering. So, relying on Graves' idea, I decided to take my students back to their preschool days to introduce them to the short story.

Going to the local Wal-mart, I purchased these children's books: *Scuffy the Tugboat*, by Gertrude Crampton; *Tootle*, by Gertrude Crampton; *The Velveteen Rabbit*, by Margery Williams; *Thumbelina*, by Hans Christian Andersen; *The Little Engine That Could*, by Watty Piper; and *Corduroy*, by Don Freeman. The next day, armed with my treasures, I went into the classroom and announced that we were ready to begin our study of the short story. I began by asking a single question of the class: "What do you know about what makes a short story?" The answers were the painfully obvious--and

expected--ones: A short story has a plot, characters, setting, and theme; a short story is short; and a short story takes less reading time than a novel.

After these responses, I asked the class to gather close around my desk as I was about to share some of my favorite stories with them; I told the students they could even sit on the floor if they wished. With just the comment "This is one of my favorite stories," I began to read *The Little Engine that Could* to the class, using my most expressive "early childhood teacher" voice. Surprise quickly appeared on faces, followed closely by recognition, then delight. The students already realized we were doing something different, although they weren't yet sure exactly what or why.

Upon finishing the story, I asked the class to comment on its value as short story based on their knowledge of the short story's characteristics--not only the four common elements of plot, character, setting, and theme, but also style, purpose, language, and any other aspect they wished to comment about. After their responses indicated they did perceive *The Little Engine That Could* fit the short story genre, I then asked them to make further comments on the particular values of this story for a very young audience--that of preschoolers. Several students commented on the story's being written to be read aloud easily; some others spoke about the lessons that the story taught--perseverance, humility, caring, etc.; still others commented on the characters, which although not human, addressed real life situations. All in all, I was pleased with the number of students who participated in the discussion.

I then read a second story to the class, *Corduroy*, repeating the same procedure as before. After discussion waned, it was time to move on to the next part of the plan. Dividing the class into four groups--two male and two female--I distributed the remaining four books--*Tootles* and *Scuffy* to the males, *The Velveteen Rabbit* and *Thumbelina* to the females. (I deliberately segregated the sexes because I felt some of the boys might be a little uncomfortable with the emotions of *The Velveteen Rabbit* and some of the girls might not enjoy the stories about boats and trains as much as the boys.) Each group was instructed to read the story aloud, each group member reading an equal number of pages. Then the groups were to discuss the book as a short story and as a teaching tool for young children. The groups were to write up their findings to present to the class orally at the end of the hour. Keeping my fingers crossed, I stood back to watch. What I discovered was that these college freshmen were enjoying this opportunity to return to the long ago of their childhood; they were reading to each other just as they would have heard the stories read to them as children. And they were really interested in the stories; no one felt "too old for this" at all. Discussion was loud, long, and lively; I actually had to call time to stop the discussion for the groups to give their reports.

Once the reports were given, I asked the class to share any insights that the day's activities had given them. One student, who was a parent, quickly spoke up to say that reading stories to children at an early age is most important, not just for entertainment, but for lesson-learning. Another student, who was single, said that he had learned that reading to his children--when he had children--would enable him to make them better moral

citizens without frightening them with so many parental rules. Another student said she had learned that good stories still have value for us, even after we think we've outgrown them. Finally, the entire class agreed that they understood as much about what short story writers are trying to do as they would have in a classroom lecture. They further agreed that this introduction had them eager to look at other short stories in our text and eager to share with their classmates the stories they enjoyed when they were young children. And that is how we ended the hour--reminiscing over our personal favorite stories from the long-ago days of our childhood!

To Willie S., With Love

Ah, Willie S., such words you used to weave!
To all the world you were a paragon.
You made us laugh with glee; you made us grieve
For Hamlet's loss and Gloucester's beggar son.
The melodious sounds of Portia's speech
Did even Shylock's evil intent tame,
And all alike abhorred Iago's breach
Of honesty by cursing his hated name.
You wrote of dark ladies and fair blond youths
In sonnet sequence, unveiling your past;
And from all your plays we discovered truths
Of timeless love and greed and lust and class.
Of all who've writ, no doubt, dear Willie S.,
Compared to you, they're only second best!

Granddad's Cellar

The cool, musty smell rising from the rich black earthen floor
of Granddad's cellar reaches my nostrils
the moment I step through the whitewashed wooden door into yesterday--

a world where ferns in giant clay pots on narrow sills rest
lush fronds against the coolness of the square-paned windows
and Mason jars filled with nails, washers, screws, and cobwebs
stand sentinel on aged worn-wood shelves;

a world perfumed by the mixture of damp-packed earth and
Prince Albert tobacco puffed through a burled walnut pipe;

a world peopled by a spunky old man who thrives on mudpies
baked in the cellar for him by his doting daughter
and who finds in the cellar a retreat from the nagging demands
of the harpies living in the house above;

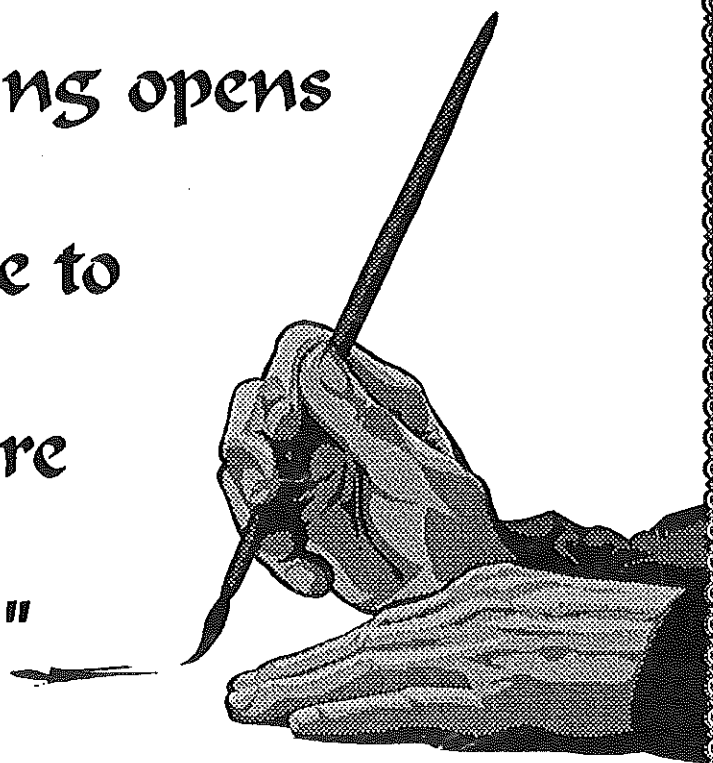
a world in which his happy humming of an unnamed oft-sung tune
or his toothless whistle makes the dimness of the bare light bulb
brightened by the halo of sunshine that follows him;

a world of warmth and happiness and love.

A world out of time, Granddad's cellar will always be there
whenever I call it up from the love-laden recesses of my heart.

Robin Jennings

"Flowing, moving
words, writing opens
a secret place to
those who are
given a key."



Fractured Fairy Tales

Students write joyfully when they enjoy assignments. They need a variety of well-chosen assignments linked, when possible, to literature. Prewriting can begin with the reading of appropriate literature selections. The content of the literature leads to development of mental pictures which can be the basis of writing an original story. Fairy tales are familiar stories to most, if not all, student writers. They lend themselves well to writing assignments.

Recently at a summer writing camp called Camp Write, instructors used an idea called "Fractured Fairy Tales." A professor at J.S.U., Steve Whitton, wrote the concept in which students were divided into small groups and given two popular fairy tale titles and four contemporary words, phrases, or brand names. The students incorporated the characters from the story and the contemporary works into a brand new "Fractured Fairy Tale." The group members planned the plot of the story. Each student was given a starter page and was responsible for one part of the story which became a draft for a big book.

Students edited the individual story pages in groups before rewriting them later in the big book. Students used poster board and large art paper to further illustrate their fairy tale. To enhance the design of the big book, instructors encouraged students to use the medieval practice of illustration known as illumination. Illumination was described as a decoration, design, or picture drawn around the first letter of a manuscript page. It added much to the borders of each page of the book. The big books were completed and reread orally in the large group. After their individual part was videotaped, the tape was shown to parents at the culminating open house.

Not If, But When Or How

Whether or not standard spelling should be taught in our classrooms is not an issue. Writers need standard spelling to convey meaning. Spelling is socially used as a literacy measurement. Since the reasons for teachers to teach spelling will always be a part of our curriculum, the issues are not if, but when and how to teach spelling.

Knowledgeable teachers will teach spelling in context. The gradual relinquishing of traditional, isolated spelling lists will give way to the use of spelling words in context. Teachers will help students learn spelling by hearing words or reading words in context. Memorizing words out of context will not ensure long term memory of the words, and sometimes it leads to the misuse of the word in sentences.

Changes come slowly and will be effective once teachers themselves first understand and then see success in new approaches. Educators must speed the evolution process along by explaining the rationale of change to parents. Normally, parents feel that if spelling lists are not being sent home, spelling is not being taught. Helping students memorize their spelling words has been a traditional way for parents to be involved in their child's schooling. Some parents resist the idea of losing this area of involvement. Parents will likely support the new approach more if they can observe what is going on in the class and assist in the reading/writing activities. When parents are convinced of the success of a new approach, they, in turn, will persuade other parents to accept changes.

Spelling should be emphasized as part of the editing process of writing. Teachers' reactions to the presence of errors in students' work usually range from one extreme to

another. One teacher might lower a grade because of spelling or grammatical errors. At the same time, another teacher might grade for content only and ignore errors altogether. Each teacher should seek to create a balance in his/her approach. Constructive help in recognized areas of weakness has been proven to eliminate common errors.

Errors can be caused by the inability of the learner to hear or see problems of spelling. Reading a variety of literature should cause students to see standard spelling used in context. They then can write on a variety of topics using standard spelling in their writing. "There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that where learners perceive the context to be relevant and one that demands standard spelling, they are likely to show a greater concern for standard spelling" (Bean 19).

Spelling does not stand apart from writing and reading. To discuss the teaching of spelling words in isolation denies the normal development of language. For those who wish to help their students, the answer is an integrated reading and writing program.

Works Cited

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The Best of Blowing Rock

Someone told me once that Carl Sandburg said, "Nearly all the best things that came to me in life have been unexpected, unplanned by me." A recent vacation experience in Blowing Rock, North Carolina, made me agree strongly with his statement.

I'd never even heard of the little town until my daughters chanced to pass through it. They were returning from a furniture-buying trip to High Point, N. C., and felt that the return trip would be less boring if they took the scenic route on the Blue Ridge Parkway. They thought the town was charming and the surrounding area was lovely because of the mountain scenery. The weather, as they traveled, was cool and pleasant. As they stopped to enjoy lunch, they found brochures listing "things-to-do" in the area. Antique shops for me and a golf course for my husband helped us to decide that a trip would be nice.

I did plan for the trip by making reservations, getting travelers checks and packing. But as I worked on the details, there was no way to plan the experiences in store.

The first experience was at our bed-and-breakfast, The Maple Lodge Inn. On vacations in the past, my family and I had always stayed at motels. The Maple Lodge Inn spoiled me. From the checkers and the games in the front parlor to the glassed-in garden breakfast room, I liked it on sight. Our room was filled with things to make us comfortable--an antique bed with homemade quilts, a fluffy duvet and sherry on the bedside table. Little touches in the bathroom like hand-milled soap and fragrant lotion developed just for Maple Lodge guests made us feel pampered. The room and adjoining bathroom were spotlessly clean too.

Yet another surprise was our host and hostess, David and Marilyn Bateman. Never before had the owner of any motel made us specially prepared featherbed eggs and

all the fixin's to go with them for breakfast. They served us with friendliness and pleasant conversation each morning as they helpfully suggested places to see such as nearby Moses Cone Manor House, Grandfather Mountain, Linville Falls, Mast General Store and Bolick Pottery.

My husband and I traveled to surrounding mountains so steep that cows should have had scoliosis just from trying to stand up straight on them. My husband wondered aloud how, when facing downhill so long to feed, they kept from having nosebleed.

It rained one time, and the mist-covered slopes next to Grandfather Mountain and Linville Falls looked just like scenes on postcards. The thunder startled us so at Linville Falls, we found shelter at a newly opened country store. The young girl behind the counter was nervous about the downpour too, but we just talked until the storm passed by.

The rain made fragrant native azaleas, rhododendron, and mountain laurel glisten. Ferns and wildflowers greeted us at every snake-shaped curve. Sheer rock cliffs would drop away to valleys far below with doll-sized farms and toothpick-shaped fences. The vistas opened beyond and seemed to go on to another place in time--all unexpected and unplanned.

Our emotions changed like a winding road weaving through the days. We felt skepticism at Minnie Bell's "Log Haus" when she sold us a "real antique" miniature tea set and later we saw the box printed with MADE IN TAIWAN on the lid. We felt repulsed by the staring eyes of the trout on our plate at the Speckled Trout Cafe and Oyster Bar.

("Here's looking at you kid--NOT!") Another time I couldn't help feeling flattered when a waiter at The Farm House Cafe sang directly to me, "I Love All The Ladies." Peggy, at the Moses Cone Manor House, surprised me with her demonstration of making cornhusk dolls while discussing children's authors. The man from Bolick Pottery amused us by telling about changes in Blowing Rock since his younger days. During the '50's the town was so small and remote, he and his buddies used Main Street for playing football on Sunday afternoon and nobody cared!

All the sights, emotions and pleasures were unplanned and really unexpected, but I will remember them as some of the "best" things of my life. Even though I wasn't on my daughters' trip with them, because they took time to think of me, I was able to experience the community and some of its treasures. No, we had never planned to go to Blowing Rock, but my husband and I are glad we did!

Today

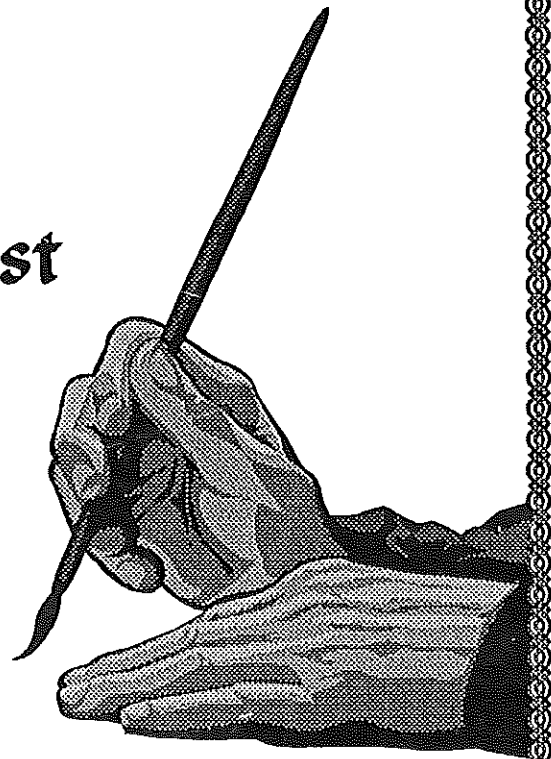
Cool mist drifted o'er scattered rocks,
Pink-tinged clouds wafted slowly above,
Small birds sang in quiet oak trees,
And it was morning.

Sun splashed shadows rode a wind-rippled lake,
With exploding brightness from a firework sun,
Birds fed their young in rounded nests,
And that was midday.

Velvet blue darkness filled a silent sky,
Long silver clouds flew quickly above ,
Birds flew home to rest for the morn,
That was the evening.

Britt Johnson

"Writing is the best
way to put your
heart into words."



The Empty Space

The Empty Space at the head of the table--
No funny faces about Mom's new ham soup

The Empty Space in the right corner of the couch--
No sounds of laughter when home movies are playing

The Empty Space at the end of the church pew--left row third
from the back--No more smells of Polo cologne

The Empty Space behind the desk--
No hand-painted Christmas decorations or Easter baskets

The Empty Space in my heart--
No more of Poppie's compassionate understanding and love

The Empty Spaces of the table, couch, pew , and desk can all
be filled with new bodies.

Poppie is dead! Gone forever!

The Empty Space in my heart. . .
Smaller with time, yet still bottomless--Never full!!!

To My Husband, The Coach

In high school I dated an athlete and thought being a coach's wife would be really neat.

A coach's wife is the team's cheerleader, cook, and supporter. At the end of a winning game, she's like a proud mother.

On the first day of August, 1992, I became a coach's wife. My dream had come true.

I was rudely awakened, spending every evening alone, and I found comfort talking for hours to friends on the phone.

Being married to a coach means griping, and crying sometimes too. How could he stay gone so much if basketball's not more important than you?

However, the lonely nights and arguments are all put aside when your husband hustles onto the court with his face filled with pride.

To Coach Johnson, winning isn't everything, you see. Teaching discipline, dedication, and determination are his responsibilities.

He's dedicated to his team, but I have his love and devotion, too. I know in my heart when he said, "You beat basketball," it really is true!

You Never Know Who's
Watching

Portrait of a Student Teacher/
Mud Wrestler

It was spring semester 1991. I was a senior at J.S.U. doing my student teaching at Saks High School. I had not missed The Bucks at Brothers or a party all semester, and on a sunny weekend in April, I wasn't about to miss ATO's Viking party.

The afternoon was passing quickly. My sorority sisters and I had drunk a few pitchers of "punch" and had been thrown in the mud pit by some ATO brothers. Just as we were getting in our cars in the McDonald's parking lot, two school buses filled with Saks choir students pulled into McDonald's for lunch. I would never have recognized the students if I hadn't heard, "Is that Miss Mitchell?" "Hey, Miss Mitchell!!!" in the background. I quickly left with my friends, hoping the Saks students would forget about seeing me by Monday.

I was **wrong**! As I opened the door of the school Monday morning, I was greeted by a boy who said, "So, Miss Mitchell, I heard you were mud wrestling this weekend." I very nonchalantly said, "I don't know what you mean." After walking down the hall through all the snickers and whispers, I went straight to Mr. Henderson, the principal, and explained the situation. Mr. Henderson chuckled and gave me some very sound advice. "Don't let them know their remarks and questions bother you," he said. "Answer their questions just like you would answer any other questions. They get their kicks when they

know they can upset you. You are a college student having fun, but I hope you've learned that you never know who's watching you."

I have worked for Mr. Henderson for four years, and I try to follow his advice. You see, the story has gotten blown out of proportion over the years. Some students think I was wearing a G-string bikini dancing on the roof of the fraternity house. Others say I was mud wrestling topless in the yard.

No matter what the rumor is, every year I am asked about my mud wrestling experience. I answer the questions honestly --- leaving out the "punch," of course --- and we all have a big laugh. Mr. Henderson's words, "You never know who's watching you" are so very true. So, be careful where you do your mud wrestling.

What Am I Missing Today?

I wonder what I'm missing today.

"He can only sleep, cry, and eat,"

Jason would say.

That's not how I see what Jake likes to do.

He likes to play with Peter Rabbit,

Tigger, and Pooh.

I see big brown eyes

saying, "Mom, I love you, "as he

looks at me after I've said, "Peek-a-Boo!"

Those are some things I miss today
too.

At this time in his life

Mom's his best friend. You

see, I can tell from his

big "gummy" grin.

I have a fear our

friendship won't last long,

His dad will soon introduce basketball

and to the gym they'll be gone.

On those days I'll be

missing him too.

These first six months
have passed by so fast.
Our first summer's almost
gone in a flash.

So, today's not the only
day I'll miss things he'll
do. He's got to grow up!
I'll miss a lot of that too.

To make a list of things I'm
missing is very hard to make.
So, I'll just say, "Today and
everyday I Miss Jake!"

Debbie Kipp

"My Words prefer
to be seen,
not heard."



Ode to a Moron

I remember him well.
He had a huge head, with big gold eyes. And he was gray.
He was a moron.
He was a cat.

I remember patching up Moron's battle wounds
And opening the kitchen blinds to find him lying on the banister staring back at me.
He loved to eat.

I remember hearing a knock at the front door.
When I opened the door, "Mo" would have his claws hooked into the screen door,
shaking it vigorously.
He was home.

I remember watching him stroll across the street for a drink out of the neighbor's goldfish
pond
And watching him saunter home from his excursions.
He always came home.

I remember sitting on the porch crying.
He jumped onto the banister and stretched out a comforting paw to touch my shoulder.
He understood.

I remember our feeble attempts at carrying on a conversation.
And the way he would stretch out on the carpet after being sneaked into the house.
He was my buddy.

I remember the sound of gunfire.

It's a Shell of a Life

Hundreds of people had walked past that crusty, old conch shell.
A few had even stepped on it.
Hour after hour, scuffling feet kicked sand on the grungy shell,
and wave after wave crashed down upon it.
It wasn't a pretty sight--it wasn't even a pretty shell,
but you knew you couldn't leave it.
And as another tremendous wave overshadowed the weathered shell,
you snatched it up and to your ear you held it.
To your surprise, instead of hearing the ocean's roar in the shell,
you heard my cries from within it.

The Me in You

As I look into your eyes,
the first things I notice are your irises of green.
They are flecked with specks of gold dust,
and they look so serene.
The pupils are large, black wells,
ominous and deep.
In them lie your dreams
fast asleep.
As I gaze a little deeper,
I see something new there too.
In the midst is a reflection--
there's a little Me in You!

What I Learned at School Today

Since my grandparents raised me as their own, I was taught the ways of a different era. Girls were to act like "Little Ladies" and boys like "Little Gentlemen." Imagine my surprise--no, astonishment--when a boy in my kindergarten class tried to choke me at recess! Following the rule "turn the other cheek," I said nothing about the incident. By saying nothing, I must have given that boy the impression that I enjoyed having his grubby paws on my throat because he continued this game at every recess.

One afternoon I came home with bruises on my neck, prompting an immediate call to my teacher. The next morning, and many more to follow, my teacher took me to the principal's office during recess, where the two of them taught me how to fight. My principal, a rather rotund woman, had me use her stomach as a punching bag. At home, my grandfather would have me demonstrate what I had learned at school each day, and of course, he would make slight modifications to the punching techniques those women had taught me.

The morning I reappeared at recess and the bully tried to strangle me was a momentous occasion. His hands rose to grasp my throat, but just before he touched the skin, I landed a hard right jab in the softness of his fat belly. His eyes bulged, his hands dropped, and he never bothered me again.

Fool in the Window

Durned if he ain't there agin'. That ol' fool in the winder. He jes' stands there and stares at me. Reckon what he's after? His beady, li'l eyes is always shiftin' left an' right. What's he lookin' fer?

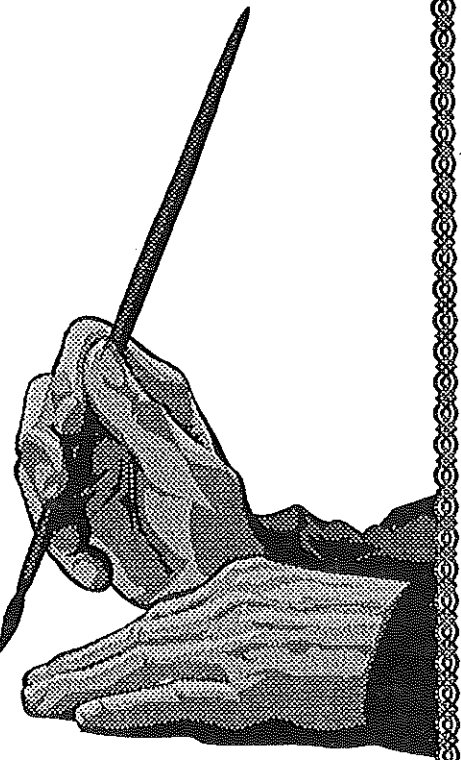
Sometimes he makes me a might uneasy, but an ol' fool like 'at ort'n to worry me. Why, what in tarnation could he do anyhow?

His face is full o' rankles. And his mouf's all drawed up like a chicken's butt-- prob'ly from tryin' to keep his new-fangled plastic teeth from jumpin' out. I'd pity the ol' fool, but I 'magine he does enuff o' that for bof a us.

He looks 'bout like 'em nasty rags he's a sportin'--plum wore out. Why don't he go on an' leave me 'lone? I scowl at him, an' he scowls at me. I grin at him, an' he grins back jes' to agitate me. Maybe if'n I go set down, that ol' fool'll quit foggin' up my winder pane.

Ellen Lacey

"There are writers who fuss
and writers who fret,
but most throw down
something
and hope for the best."



Overcoming the English Teacher's Blues

For the five years I took piano lessons, I heard it softly relayed from my teacher's gentle lips. While marching in the band, I couldn't help but hear from our staunch director as he blared it. Even my English teacher, a tired old man, crooned it. Now, I find myself preaching it. "Practice makes perfect."

As a beginning teacher, I struggled, night after night, with the undue mounds of essays, reports, and journals. Trying to grade everything my students wrote became an impossibility. I soon found myself assigning fewer writing activities. This bothered me--a lot. I enjoyed writing myself, and I knew that many of my students did also. I also knew they were not getting enough opportunities to practice using their writing skills. So, I decided to stop the madness and excavate myself from this tomb of papers.

First, I established the journal as a place to do prewriting activities which eliminated the need for my grading each entry. I simply counted the number of ideas the students had journaled. Second, I doubled the number of writing assignments and instructed students that I would grade each essay for only one skill at a time. For example, if we had recently studied comma usage, I would proofread their papers for superfluous commas or comma splices. Once or twice every six weeks, I would grade a student's essay (one of his own choosing) in its entirety.

By alleviating my paperload, I was able to give the students more opportunities to practice. They wrote more in the course of a year than I could ever have graded in three. All teachers must provide many opportunities that allow students to employ their writing

skills. They can never write too much. So what if you don't read it all or assign each essay a grade! "Practice (does) make perfect."

The King Is Dead

The first time I experienced real loneliness happened on a sweltering southern summer night in August of 1978. Elvis fans around the world spent the night in mourning. The king was dead, and I too felt as helpless as his fans. Not because I was a candle-lighting, standing-in-a-circle-and-swaying kind of Elvis idol worshipper--but because I was all alone in a twelve-room house with my ailing grandmother. I was a naive girl of thirteen being thrust into the adult role of caretaker.

It was on this night that I discovered several truths about life. My grandfather was in the hospital with a mangled arm eaten by a heavy piece of farm machinery. He had lost a lot of blood, and several nerves had been severed. Since it was 1978, hospitalization was a necessity. My grandmother was also suffering. She was inflicted with bone cancer, a disease which had obliterated the bones in her back. Since both grandparents were ill, I was needed to sit with my grandmother. Such a task was a heavy burden for a girl of thirteen; yet, I somehow managed to be of comfort to my dying grandmother.

Elvis's sudden death, my grandfather's accident, and my grandmother's debilitating ailment prevented me from restful sleep that night. All of my feelings seemed to culminate into one emotion -- fear. If death could find a mega-star like Elvis in a mansion in Memphis, then death could certainly find my grandparents on a small farm in rural Alabama. Given the circumstances, I was frightened and alone for the first time in my life. I remember lying in that oversized bed, staring at the ceiling, wishing my ears would stop

magnifying the sounds outside my window and wishing I had left the light on in the closet. I was determined not to show my fear to my grandmother. When she called for me, I heard her immediately as I still had not found sleep. She only needed water and reassurance that I was resting comfortably. I wanted to grab her, crawl in bed next to her, and forget the ugliness of the death outside. That part of me I didn't know I had until that moment made me strong and made me say that I was just fine and to call if she needed me.

I suddenly realized that maybe Elvis' untimely death had its effect on her as well. Maybe my grandmother realized her own mortality and that of her husband. I decided not to trouble her with my childish fears. After I knew that she had drifted back to sleep, I grabbed a pillow and a blanket and stumbled into the darkness of my grandmother's room. I lay on the floor next to my grandmother's bed listening intently for the rise and fall of her chest knowing that I could awake and return to my bed before daybreak without her knowledge.

That long fretful night was fifteen years ago. As I recall it now, I wonder if my grandmother knew my presence in her room or if she knew just how scared I actually was of death that night in August. Since my grandmother's death, I have learned several truths. I believe that grandmothers know everything we think they don't know. I believe that night was a special time when grandmother and granddaughter unknowingly connected. I believe we both acted unselfishly out of love for the other. I believe that Elvis' death, my grandfather's accident, and my grandmother's illness were all tragedies that happened for a special purpose. For that reason, I don't cry.

Far from Bedlam

I done quit my man--
done left him!
Packed my stuff
and rolled down the mountain
dodging those potholes
like Uncle Eubee dodging bullets.
I'm going south this time
driving under the orange moon
till the cicadas hush their singing
or till I'm no longer looking for him
in the eyes on the road
or the hands that brush my hair.
I'm gonna ride along this horizon
till the clouds lick the sand dunes
and I'm so far from Bedlam and him
I don't know how happy I'll be.

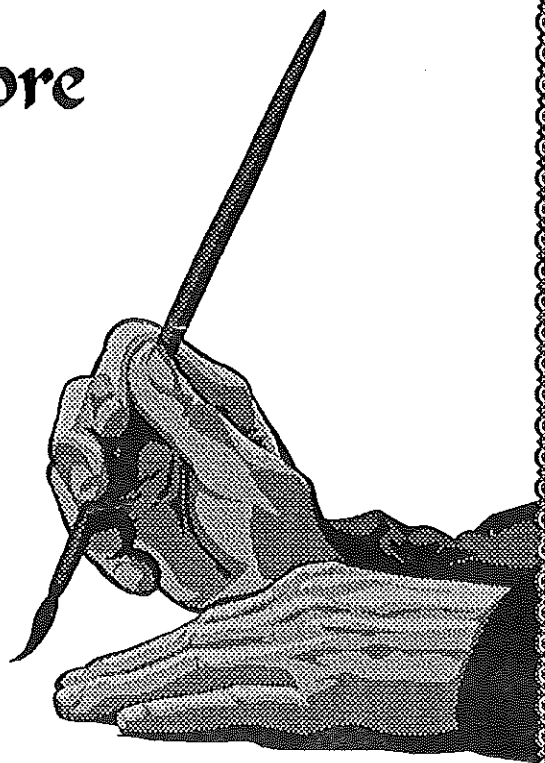
A TEMPORARY PLACE

We left this love,
you and I,
like cold, enfeebled dogs,
who finally tired of yelping,
yelping at an apathetic master,
who is turning,
turning away from the voices
near his ear,
from what is,
from what should be,
each dwelling like crippled,
displaced veterans
on what could have been.
We go to this temporary place,
you and I,
somewhere between love and unlove,
and wait . . .
for final understanding.
We will just fade
like the paper-thin
blooms among blooms
of Aunt Verbena's vanishing
Victorian walls.

Tonia McCurdy

"Good writers explore
the possibilities.

Through revision,
adventure awaits."



The Big Picture

Dear God,

I would like to thank you for all the blessings you have bestowed upon me today. I know that by having faith in you, all things are possible. Thank you.

Amen

This is the conclusion to my morning and evening prayer. I added this portion about one year ago. The reasoning behind my decision stemmed from **Dusty Mae "Pooh-Pooh" Jennings**, my **"fatty."** Before the arrival of Dusty Mae, I frequently found faults with my life. I was not the size I wanted to be, I did not perform as well as I wanted to in my classes, I did not have enough clothes, and so forth. As I reflect on these complaints today, I am truly ashamed of the molehills I made into mountains. However, my attitude today is totally different. I am now a firm believer in embracing the greatness of life rather than wallowing in the negative aspects of it. **"Woody-Woo"** has been very beneficial to my life; she has taught me how to combine the good points and the bad points of life into a meaningful whole.

One way that I combine all of life into a meaningful sum is by appreciating the little things in life. Initially, I almost had to learn this the hard way, but two incidents involving **"Pac Rat"** saved the day. One November night around 9:30, I was taking a bath, and Ondray was playing Nintendo while **"Goat Goat"** lounged in the living room window. Suddenly, she jumped down and stared at the door and then back at Ondray. She repeated this several times until finally Ondray looked outside. Unfortunately, there was a stranger

lurking outside the house. This person heard Ondray approaching the door, and he ran off. This incident demonstrated how crime is everywhere, no matter where you live. Therefore, I have learned to appreciate such things as having food to eat and a warm bed to sleep in.

Another incident that **"Fat Stinky"** and I shared was her visit to the vet. The aftereffect of this visit caused me to realize the brevity of life, and I also realized the importance of human contact. **"Pooty-Wooty"** had been with me about six months when the time came for her to be spayed. I was terrified and nervous about the idea because I knew I would have to leave her for a few days. This was our first time apart; therefore, once Friday morning came, I anxiously raced to pick her up. However, nothing could have prepared me for the kitty the vet placed before me. I was shocked because it seemed as if my playful, loving, energetic, yet gentle baby had been transformed into a decrepit puss. Not only was **"Pooh-Nanny"** ill emotionally; she was also changed physically. Her sides were sunk in, and her voice seemed as light as a cool breeze. Her whine had gone from delightful to heart-breaking. Nevertheless, the vet assured me that these conditions were normal after surgery. He gave me her postoperative instructions, and we left. I thought surely once **"Baby-Pops"** got home and saw some familiar surroundings, she would cheer up. Unfortunately, her mood didn't change, no matter what I did. I tried to play catch with her, but she was too sore to move. Next, I tried to get her to respond to her enemy, Mr. Mouse, but she wasn't in the mood for that either. Finally, out of desperation, I attempted to bribe her with one of her favorite treats, tuna bites. It was

after this failed attempt that I started to panic. Never before had **"Mikey"** turned down a treat. Therefore, at this stage I thought I might have to call the emergency hot-line. I was really beginning to feel a sense of hopelessness; it didn't seem fair that she might be taken away from me so soon. Instinctively, I picked her up and rubbed her to sleep. After about two hours, she hopped on the floor. She went over to her food dish, and she started to eat. This was the best sound I thought I would ever hear. The answer to the problem had been there all day, but I was too concerned to see it. The only thing **"Miss Dusty"** wanted was to feel safe and loved once again. Ondray woke up and got the camera. That was the first night we took family pictures, but it was also the best.

Someone once remarked, "It's not the big things that shape our lives--it's the little ones." I'm not sure of who this author is, but I totally agree with him. These two incidents have shaped my life forever. I now realize how lucky I am to be surrounded by such an abundance of good fortune. I am very grateful to Miss Dusty Mae **"Pooh-Pooh, Wooty-Woo, Pac-Rat, Goat-Goat, Fat Stinky, Pooty-Wooty, Mikey, Baby-Pops"** Jennings for showing me how to get the most out of life. In order to show my appreciation, I will never ask her to write out her name, although I'm sure she is more than capable.

"Oh, No, Not Again!"

This title reveals the response most teachers receive when assigning "The Paper." One possible reason why the student dreads this assignment is the restrictions placed on him through a Teacher-Directed Research Paper. This type of paper sets guidelines which include checkpoints and deadlines for notecards, "biblio" cards, outlines and the first draft. On the other hand, a Student-Directed Research Paper releases the constraints of time and procedure; therefore, the student can show off his potential. The less formal approach emphasized throughout the Student-Directed Research Paper allows the student to set his own pace, makes him the authority, and doesn't inhibit his creativity/expression.

An advantage of a Student-Directed Research Paper is that it allows the student to use different work methods. By allowing the student to set his own pace, the pressures of time are nearly diminished. This is beneficial because each individual student can follow a method that he is comfortable with. For example, one student may prefer to start and stop, while another may prefer to work consistently.

A second advantage of the Student-Directed Research Paper is that the student is the authority. This forces the student to use his critical thinking skills. He has to determine what material is crucial to strengthening his viewpoint, and he must determine if all of his points relate to his thesis.

Still yet another advantage of a Student-Directed Research Paper is that it doesn't inhibit a student's creativity/expression. Through the elimination of checkpoints, a student can feel free to go back and add or detract ideas, thus clarifying his point.

In order for the student to become slightly less apprehensive about term papers, a Student-Directed Approach should be considered. This format prevents the stifling effects of time and procedure from colliding with open expression and sheer fun.

* The use of the masculine pronoun is generic, referring to both sexes.

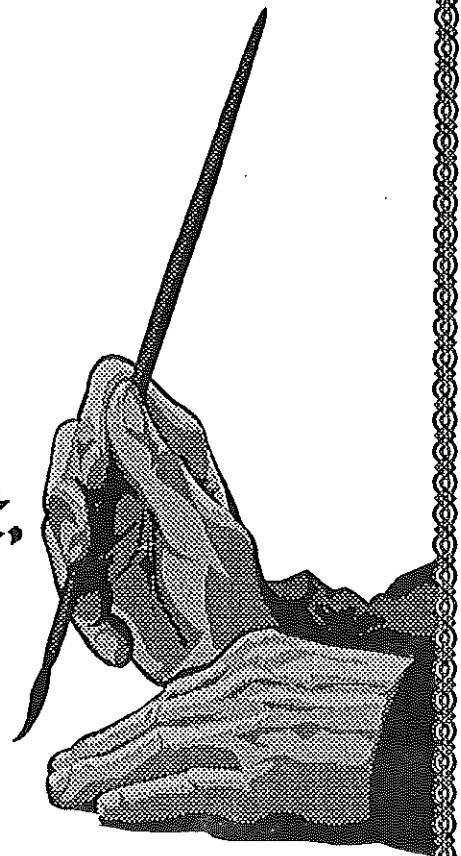
Traci Shaw

"Writing--

searches the past,

holds onto the present,

explores the future."



The Coach

From August to May, Monday through Sunday,
or basically each day of the year,

Your time is consumed by something you love;
A place where fans go to cheer.

A field, a gym, or a baseball diamond;
All three create a great atmosphere.

The strike of the pads, the squeak of a sneaker,
or the smell of a leather glove.

The only other place you'd rather be
is with me--your love.

But the gleam in your eye or the smile on your face
when a player makes a tackle,
hits a shot,
or knocks a homerun
is enough for me to keep supporting
all the molding of lives you've done.

OUTDOOR HAIKU

Being introduced to poetry can sometimes seem overwhelming to students. They find it difficult to interpret and almost impossible to write. One of the first poetry assignments I introduce to my students is the haiku. It is an assignment that they adjust to easily because of the structured format.

The haiku is a form of poetry that was established by the Japanese in the seventeenth century. It is based on a specific theme which is formed from thoughts and images. The poem is written in a three-line form with five syllables in the first and third lines, and seven in the second.

When introducing the haiku, I begin the lesson with a class reading of prepared selections. The class discusses the themes of the poems, and they break down the syllables. The following example is a selection of a poem they may read:

The sun shining bright
Beats down on the dry, worn earth
Creating a drought.

Once the students have grasped the format of the haiku, the next step is creating their own poem. For the prewriting activity, I move the session outside. The students are then able to use the sights and sounds of their environment to spark their imaginations. By looking at the clouds, insects, trees, and flowers, they begin expressing their thoughts on paper. They can choose clustering, brainstorming, or looping in order to gather all their thoughts and images together.

After the students have completed the prewriting stage, the last step is to create three original poems in the haiku form. The main problem the students encounter is creating a poem containing their thoughts without going over the seventeen syllable requirement.

Once the students have completed their assignments, we form a group for sharing time. During sharing time, it is amazing to see the students considering themselves as poets. We not only look at the structure of the poem, but we also discuss the reasons for choosing their topics. It is helpful to the teacher and the other students to see what triggered their ideas.

Some students will collect objects that they have used as topics in their poems. For example, four-leaf clovers, dead insects, and flowers are always favorites. Other students are intrigued by lying on the ground and looking into the sky to create poems associated with clouds.

The haiku exercise is a great assignment to introduce students to the different types of poetry. The students are learning a structured format but are able to expand their thoughts and create images in their writings.

Clinging To A Memory

Coming to grips with my grandfather's illness was a milestone in my life. It is still uncertain to me why I chose to fight the acceptance for so long. A man who had labored thirty-seven years for his family went from age seventy-two back to his crib in a matter of twelve months.

It started not long after his retirement with bouts of forgetfulness. First, it was minor things such as losing his keys. Slowly his ability to drive slipped from his mind, and each time he drove away, grandmother wondered if he would return safely.

He was the only person other than me who failed to recognize the changes in his life until one day when he and grandmother went to town. He dropped her off at the bank and ran to a local store to purchase some gardening supplies. After forty minutes of waiting, grandmother became anxious. Finally, he returned and was ashamed to tell her he forgot his way to the bank and had to ask for directions.

Every three months we noticed a change, and each stage would be marked by a major occurrence. Grandfather was the type of person that never trusted anyone with his money but himself. It was not unusual for him to carry large amounts of money in his wallet. He was very particular about his wallet and kept it with him at all times. One day he had gone outside the county to purchase a tractor. When he returned home, he began frantically looking for his wallet. He had left it at the store, and surprisingly, all three thousand dollars was still there when he retrieved it.

For many years his hobby had been gardening. From daybreak to dark he could be found in one of his six gardens. He became puzzled one day when he couldn't remember where he had planted his beans. After becoming extremely frustrated, he decided that he had not planted any, so he went to the store, bought more seed, and planted a second row of beans.

Things he had known all his life were fading from his memory. He forgot names but not faces. Often, when he would be approached by someone he had known for many years, he would say, "I know your face, but I can't recall your name."

The forgetfulness he experienced was followed by more uncontrolled behaviors. He soon forgot how to climb stairs, feed himself, and even sit up straight. My grandparents' bedroom became a hospital room, and my grandmother became confined within the walls of their home.

Out of a family of five, the only child that lived nearby was my uncle. He worked long hours but would come to visit as often as he could. I was in college about thirty minutes away, and I felt pulled to stay with them every weekend. My grandmother had no one to talk to, so I became her outlet. I was able to help her by staying with my grandfather. Every Sunday I stayed home with my grandfather in order for her to go to church. I would sit in his room talking to a person who couldn't talk back to me. Even though he only said a few words, the smile on his face said all I needed to know.

In the summer of my freshman year in college, my grandmother took a trip with a group that she and my grandfather often traveled with. My grandfather stayed in a nearby

hospital. They had taken care of him before, when the family had persuaded grandmother to get away for awhile. Although he had many nurses, grandmother insisted that family and friends visit him daily. A day didn't pass that I wasn't there feeding him lunch or reading the paper. Each day when I left, I felt terrible for leaving him there. I knew that he didn't really know where he was, but I did. It was as if I was feeling all the emotions he no longer felt.

When my grandmother returned from her trip, she wasn't allowed to bring him home because he had contracted pneumonia, which had settled in his lungs. Eating had become a difficult task because his throat glands were deteriorating. One afternoon while grandmother was feeding him, he choked, and particles entered his lungs. We were then told that it would only be a matter of time before his heart would completely give out.

At 2:00 a.m. the following morning, the nurse called to inform us that his heartbeat had fallen drastically. The fifteen minute drive seemed like eternity as we were guided by the moonlight down I-20. My aunt was in town from Georgia, so she and grandmother arrived at the hospital first. By the time we got there, he had already been pronounced dead. My grandmother refused to leave him, so we waited until the funeral home director arrived. As I sat in the lobby waiting, I heard the sound of wheels hitting tile; I turned, only to see a body bag and a Bible. At that moment, I had had my first encounter with death. I had not only lost my grandfather, but I had lost a friend. In his deepest hours of pain, my grandmother and I were the only two people he ever remembered.

After his death, I visited his grave daily. It was hard for me to let go, even though

I knew he no longer suffered. It wasn't until four years ago that I realized he doesn't have to be here in person because he lives in my heart.

Shannon Smith

"The best gift that you
could give to a child is
the opportunity to read
and write every day."



Journals Across the Curriculum

Journal writing has always been a wonderful type of therapy for me. I can write things on paper that I could never tell anyone else, and it makes me feel better to get those feelings and thoughts off my chest. Unfortunately, journal writing in the classroom does not always benefit the student. Instead of encouraging students to use journals as a tool for learning, we sometimes make journal writing a chore or just another writing assignment. Different types of journals are available for use in the classroom and can be easily integrated into every aspect of the elementary curriculum: language arts, social studies, science, and math.

What is a journal? Webster's Dictionary compares a journal to a diary, "a diary record of happenings." There are other types of journals besides the diary which include the response journal and the learning log. Each of these can be incorporated successfully into the classroom curriculum, and each can be beneficial to students.

Diaries are not used as often in the classroom as other journals because they record personal information that may be private to the writer. Learning logs are a type of class journal that contains information about school subjects. These types of journals help students to digest new facts, methods, procedures, etc., by allowing the student to write down any and all information they consider to be important. Response journals give students the opportunity to write their opinions and feelings about books and stories. Teachers and other students may also respond to their comments in this type of journal.

There are many ways to utilize journal writing in the language arts curriculum. Response or dialogue journals are generally used because of the different types of literature read in the classroom. Students may be reading a variety of genres, and journal writing gives them an opportunity for expressing their feelings about these books. It is important for teachers to ask questions about students' entries and make positive comments to encourage them to continue writing.

Journal writing is also important to use in the social sciences. Students may implement any format they feel comfortable using, such as webbing, listing, outlining, etc. It is important that students respond in their journals during at least three points of a unit. At the introduction of a unit, teachers are able to see any information that is already known by the student. During a topic of study, students are given time to write to show areas of interest or discuss any problems they may be experiencing. Writing at the conclusion of a unit is to check for comprehension. Students may use their journals as learning logs at any other time they, or the teacher, feel it is necessary. A journal is a good place for listing methods in science or for outlining social studies facts.

Math is also a subject where journal writing is welcomed. Students may write about how a question was answered, construct word problems, or suggest new ways of teaching math. This is also a time for writing procedures for solving mathematical equations. Teachers may assign a word problem for students to apply what they have learned.

Journal writing must be implemented daily into the school curriculum if it is to be a successful approach to better writing. At this point, the focus is on writing, not evaluation. The key to motivation is the teacher's responding to each journal (not entry) on a regular basis. The theory is that writing facilitates learning. By their using journals in your classroom consistently, students will not only retain information better, but they will also develop a sense of pride about their writing.

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My First Day of School

As I step out of the car, there is a slight breeze in the air. It is already humid, though, and I think to myself it is going to be a hot one. As I hurry toward the building, anxious to get to my room, I suddenly have that sinking feeling. You know, the feeling you get when you realize you have forgotten something really important.

After all the planning and preparing for this special day, what could I have possibly forgotten? My classroom had been ready for a week; it couldn't be that. I quickly glance down as if to make sure I am completely dressed and my shoes are matching. Then, I feel inside my new book bag for my pens and clean white paper. Oh, no! Did I forget my lesson plan for the day? What would I do if I couldn't find it? I wouldn't know where to begin. I suddenly begin to panic. Finally, after what seems like an eternity, I find it tucked safely inside my notebook.

Still, I have that feeling. Did I forget to turn off the iron? No, I had been so afraid that I would be late my first day that I had ironed my dress a week in advance. What could it be? Then, I remember. As I watch the children rushing into the building, I quietly say a prayer...

"Dear God, I know I almost forgot you today, but please don't forget me. Please give me the strength to get through this first day and the wisdom to know what to say to these scared and excited young minds. Help me to show them that I care even if no one at home does. Teach me to have patience and understanding, especially on days like today. Most of all, God, help me to always remember that through you I can accomplish anything."

As I walk toward the door, I take a deep breath and put on my best smile, relieved that I had not forgotten the most important thing.

HATCHER

Most children love to write if you can find something that piques their interest. The key word, however, is "if." One particular lesson that greatly inspired my children to write was called "Hatcher." The students were so excited about the project that many asked to work on it during their free time.

The activities continued five days and included reading children's books, writing creatively, publishing final drafts, and a cooking lesson! We read Horton Hatches An Egg by Dr. Seuss to introduce a new word that many had not fully understood in the past. That word was "responsibility." They were given an egg to babysit for an entire day. The children had to take their egg with them wherever they went or else find someone to take care of it.

Children were also given a writing prompt for the writing portion of the lesson. Students were encouraged to prewrite or web their ideas before they began. The use of adjectives was imperative for the success of this creative writing activity. Students who had already been introduced to this skill were able to use this writing activity as practice. Several days were necessary for the writing segment of "Hatcher" to include prewriting, rough drafts, editing, proofreading, revising and final drafts. When final drafts were completed, the stories were bound together to make a big book for the classroom.

After the writing process was finished, students made "Noodle Nests" by melting chocolate frosting and mixing it with Chinese noodles. The students then used their fingers to form a nest. While eating their "nests," the children were given the opportunity

to read their stories to their classmates. This portion of the lesson was used as a culminating activity.

The children's interests were definitely piqued by these lessons. I was also motivated to find other activities that would be as exciting for them as "Hatcher" had been.

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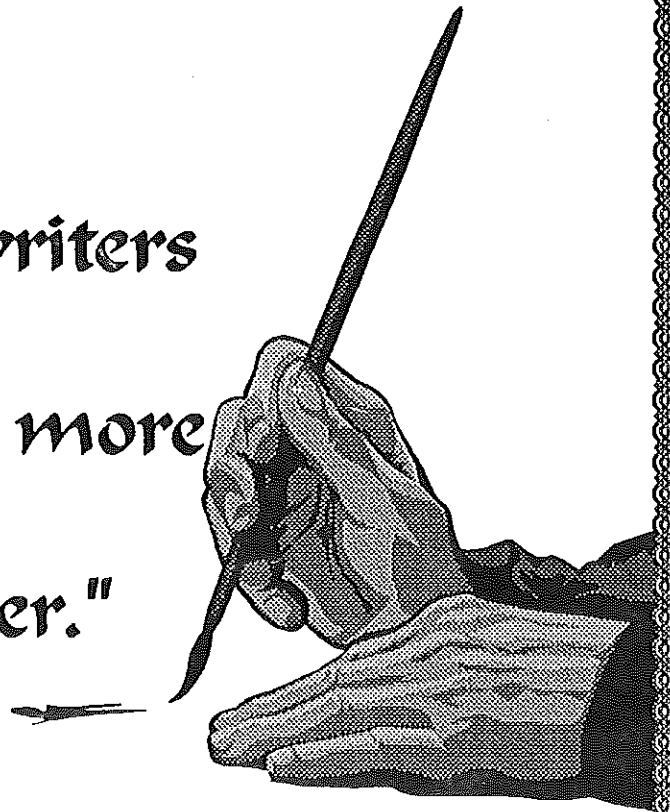
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SUMMER VACATION

As I walk slowly down the beach,
I feel the brown sand squeeze between my toes.
Sea gulls fly gracefully overhead.
Tiny sand crabs crawl to safety before
being washed out to sea.
The palm trees sway gently in the ocean breeze.
Seashells of every color, size, and shape
lay along the shore.
As children play in the sand, their laughter
brings a smile to my face.
Waves crash loudly on the beach and then
roll softly onto my feet.
Dolphins jump merrily in the crystal
blue-green waters.
Steaming rays of sunshine burst through the
clear sky, warming my body and soul,
energizing me.

Lisa Williams

"Belonging to a
community of writers
helps us to write more
and to write better."



Magazine Magic: Advertisements Can Help You Teach Writing

Don't throw away your old magazines! Let them work magic in your classroom.

Besides the obvious uses of providing a source for cut-out pictures and giving early-finishers something to read, magazines, particularly magazine advertisements, can help you teach writing. Here are some suggestions.

TITLES--If your students are having trouble with titles--capitalization, relevance, cleverness--let them collect titles from magazines, make mini-posters, and then discuss these. All the advice put dryly and succinctly in their writing textbook (capitalize key words, don't underline your own title, use vivid words, work on brevity) can be vividly illustrated by examples from magazine articles. For a class exercise, collect some good examples ahead of time, share and discuss these with the class, and then let them find their own examples. Your students' titles are guaranteed to improve!

SENTENCES AND SENTENCE FRAGMENTS--You can liven up your lesson on sentence fragments by turning to magazine advertisements. Students above sixth grade level have already seen and ignored a disturbingly large number of grammar exercises on this topic and are guaranteed to ignore any sentence fragment exercise taken from a text or workbook. Instead, let them look at magazine advertisements.

For this activity, start with a transparency or opaque projection of a magazine advertisement for a product your students would use or like to have. Together, go through the ad, examining the use of sentences and fragments. Then, give each student the assignment provided in Figure 1.

1. Select an advertisement from the magazines provided. Choose one that has some printed copy along with pictures and logos. Carefully tear out the ad.

2. Write a brief description of the ad, citing the product and magazine in which it was advertised. To what audience do you think the ad appeals?

3. Analyze the sentences in the ad, answering these questions.

- How many groups of words punctuated by periods are there in the advertisement? _____
- How many are sentences? _____
- How many are fragments? _____
- What is the percentage of fragments in the ad? _____

Total number of fragments (divided by) _____ = _____ x 100 = _____ %

Total number of groups of words punctuated by periods _____

4. Write down the fragments from the ad you examined (q 3c). What essential part (subject or verb or both) is missing? Revise the fragments to be sentences.

Figure 1 Fragment exercise

Students will be surprised and possibly critical that the advertisers use so many fragments. At this point, some student will probably point out for you that in some ads, the use of fragments is effective. This leads your class naturally to a discussion of stylistic fragments and the concept that different styles of writing fit different occasions and purposes. You can then turn to your text's discussion of the stylistic fragment for reinforcement of this idea. You may even want to make a bargain with your students about experimenting with stylistic fragments, allowing them to use one occasionally if an asterisk (*) is placed by the fragment to assure you the fragment was intentional.

SENTENCE VARIETY--In an extension of the sentence and fragment activity, you can also have students analyze and classify the sentences in advertisements according to function (declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, imperative) or structure (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex).

LITERARY AND STYLISTIC DEVICES--Magazine advertisements provide a treasure trove of examples of rhetorical schemes and tropes, all the stylistic devices from alliteration to zeugma! Probably most of us associate schemes and tropes with poets, prose stylists, and Victorian schoolmasters, but the "Madison Avenue" crowd uses rhetorical devices to provide those modern and catchy phrases and clever turns of thought we associate with the language of advertising. In fact, Corbett asserts that the writers of ads are "some of the most skilled rhetoricians in our society" (5). Just flip through your own favorite magazine, looking at the ads, and you will be amazed at the number of similes, metaphors, alliterations, antitheses, puns, rhetorical questions, anaphora (repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses), polyptoton (repetition of words derived from the same root), epistrophe (repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive clauses), and many others.

For a class activity, provide a list of terms and definitions; then have students examine magazine ads for a set number of examples. Next, have them write down the example, name the rhetorical device, and highlight the device by underlining. Lists can then be shared and discussed. They will find all the schemes and tropes you've taught them, plus more you may not have names for. Corbett's Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student is an excellent resource for information on schemes and tropes.

RHETORICAL SITUATION--As Christina Hass and Linda Flower note, many students, particularly less sophisticated students, simply do not read with a sense of the rhetorical situation, not understanding that prose emerges from a real situation, with a definite purpose and with an actual person doing the writing, with a reader in mind (167-168). To help your students as both writers and consumers, let them examine the rhetorical situation of advertisements. Duplicate or show with an opaque projector several ads; then discuss the targeted audience, intended message, and the actual sender of the message. After this group activity, let the students work individually to evaluate the rhetorical situation of several ads.

PERSUASIVE WRITING--After working with students on the rhetorical situations of advertisements, you can move naturally into a study of persuasive writing. Although your students may be shy in talking about writing formal arguments, they will be very comfortable talking about their favorite (and least favorite) advertisements. Try starting a class discussion by asking what types of reasons or arguments can be made to persuade others. Usually, with a little coaxing, your students will come up with Aristotle's **logos** (logic), **pathos** (emotion), and **ethos** (credibility). Then, ask them to think of advertisements that use these appeals. After having them work together on analysis of the appeals used in ads, let them complete the individual assignment shown in Figure 2.

Students, advertisements make use of the three classical appeals of argument and persuasion: logic, emotion, credibility. Using the suggestions provided, find advertisements that illustrate each of these appeals. Answer these questions about the ads you select.

I. LOGICAL APPEAL

1. What product is being advertised?
2. What audience is targeted in the ad?
3. Explain how the ad appeals to the logic of the reader.
4. Are other appeals used? If so, what and how?

II. EMOTIONAL APPEAL

1. What product is being advertised?
2. What audience is targeted in the ad?
3. Explain how the ad appeals to the emotions of the reader.
4. Are other appeals used? If so, what and how?

III. CREDIBILITY

1. What product is being advertised?
2. What audience is targeted in the ad?
3. Explain how the ad appeals to the reader from the credibility or reputation of the seller or product.
4. Are other appeals used? If so, what and how?

Figure 2 Appeals in Advertisement

After completing this analysis of advertisements, students will know exactly what you mean by appealing to logic, emotion, and credibility and will be ready to work on persuasive topics of their own.

These are just a few of the ways that advertisements can help you teach writing. And if you are wondering how on earth to collect enough magazines, don't worry! Just tell your students you will give them bonus points for bringing in magazines for the classroom collection!

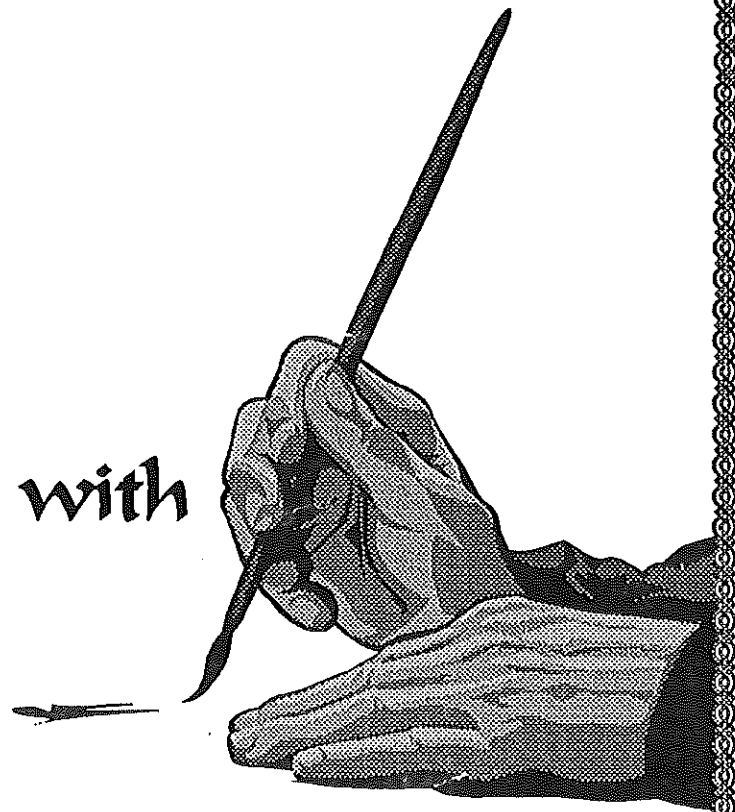
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Barbara Wynn

"At least one
author started with
'I was born.'"



I Was Born

I was once asked to write an autobiography in a writing class. I learned not to start with "I was born," but during that project, I was born--as a writer. I must have rewritten that autobiography five times before I felt I had indeed finished the requirements of the assignment. Since that time, I have written several works that have helped me label myself as a writer.

Some of my best writing has come from letters I have written over the past twenty years to a childhood friend in upstate New York. Pouring out my adolescent joys and fears in virtual tomes helped me get through those turbulent years. Unfortunately, due to several moves and lack of space, most of my work has gone the way of the rubbish. I'm sure most of Shakespeare's best work went the same way.

That old elusive American novel floating half finished through the circuits of my computer is simply entitled Book. I return to this conglomeration of rhetorical garbage every few months to pour furiously over a verb tense here, a possible dangler there. Though this work is not the tool I use to label myself a writer, I hope it will help me one day to raise my tax bracket.

I also enjoy keeping a travel journal. Unfortunately, my friends who have read parts of it tell me that it basically has nothing to do with where I've been. Many of the experiences I chose to write about could have taken place just about anywhere. I tell my friends that if they want to see the Lincoln Memorial to go look at it, but if they want to know how I felt being irresistibly pulled to the left as I walked back down the steps, then

read my journal. Does that make me a writer? Who knows? At least one person who was a writer began one of his novels with, "I was born."

Writing with the Bard

Ask students what their least favorite aspect of literature class is, and many will tell you Shakespeare. How can this be when every year millions of people flock to stages big and small to see renditions written by the mighty Bard redone countless times? Studying Shakespeare in the classroom is just not the same as making an occasion out of seeing one of his plays. If we teach Shakespeare beyond the mundane reading, take-the-test attitude, students will enjoy it more and understand it better when they take the occasions later in life to go see the plays. In order for students to gain the most out of Shakespeare, they must be exposed to a history of Shakespeare and the language he used, gain a thorough understanding of the story involved in the play, and be conscientious of the breakdown of the play by acts.

Most students who shudder at studying Shakespeare do so because of the difficulty in understanding the language. Rygiel suggests that teachers approach the language according to several aspects of the plays including "speaker, situation, audience, group identification, and genre [or] subgenres identification" (31). If teachers give examples of these aspects from the play, the students will have some reference on how to read each scene of the play. To help develop a sense of reflection of voice, the teacher may wish to show several clips of the different aspects of the language before the reading of the plays. To check for understanding, they can then ask the students to write about how they feel about the language and even try writing some on their own. The importance of understanding "how" to read the plays is tantamount in this case to being able to read at

all. For many students, Elizabethan speech is a whole new language that must be tackled before any understanding of the story can take place.

After reaching a basic understanding of how to read Shakespeare, students are ready to move on to the story in the play. The plays are much easier to read if the reader has an idea of what is going to happen. Shakespeare's plays are not the latest mystery novels, and it is all right to know what happens at the end. The teacher can create a classroom timeline and allow the students to write in the action of the play as she reads the story of Romeo and Juliet or Hamlet or Julius Caesar. Even a children's storybook of the plays will give a basic understanding before the students read. Swope suggests prereading prompts to help the students relate to the characters of Romeo and Juliet. The students can write about a time when adults just did not understand them, or the teacher can provide a scenario in which two groups of students argue and the principal does not believe that one group started it (218-220).

Students are ready to read the play after they realize what is going to happen to whom. The play should be read carefully act by act. To check for understanding, the teacher should allow students to refer to the classroom time-line and make additions or changes as needed. Writing activities should follow each act for reaction.

Writing with the Bard before, during, and after the play will help students shed their misgivings of studying Shakespeare. A basic understanding of Shakespeare's language and of the story itself will help students prepare for tackling the reading of the

play. If students learn how to read Shakespeare, they will be among the millions of fans who, for generations, have patronized the theater.

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Rygiel, Mary Ann. Shakespeare Among School Children: Approaches for the Secondary Classroom. Urbana: NCTE, 1992.

Swope, J.W. "A Whole Language Approach to Romeo and Juliet." Teaching Shakespeare Today: Practical Approaches and Productive Strategies. Eds. James E. Davis and R.E. Salome. Urbana: NCTE, 1993. 218-230.

Not Again

Good Lord, Not Again!
I'm starting to remember
What I forgot:
The incredible nausea
That kept my stomach in knots.

I seem to recall
Tender breasts up here,
Swollen ankles down there,
But that great mound of belly
Made me almost not care.

Oh yes, that's right,
Those disgusting stretch marks
Which seemed almost to fade.
Will the old ones grow longer
Or new jagged tracks be laid?

Oh, I shudder to think
Of images of dark corridors at night.
It isn't in my karma
To go through labor in the light.

Dear Lord, Now I remember
Why I forgot:
Those ten little fingers
And wiggling little toes,
Two sparkling blue eyes
And a perfect little nose.

Atwell, Nancie, ed. Coming to Know: Writing to Learn in the Intermediate Grades.
Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1990.

Coming to Know is a wonderful book written by thirteen teachers and edited by Nancie Atwell. Each teacher has written a chapter based on the reading/writing program that has been implemented in the classroom. Several of the chapters in the book discussed the use of journal writing, not only in language arts but also in social studies and science. The authors suggested having students begin units by writing "what they already know" about a topic in their journals. Their responses would be discussed and displayed somewhere in the room for future reference. Students would then be asked to write what they hope to learn from the unit. They are allowed to "check off" these items when the answer is found. At the end of a unit, students write in their journals any information that they learned during the lessons. They are also allowed to draw, map, web, or list, etc., to help them remember any facts or processes discussed.

Shannon Smith

Cambourne, Brian, and Jan Turbill. Coping With Chaos. Maryborough, Australia:
Australian Print Group, 1988.

Brian Cambourne and Jan Turbill dispel the belief, or common interpretation, that "Process-Writing" classrooms are merely chaotic, where little learning takes place. "Process Writing," commonly referred to as "whole language," is thoroughly examined in Coping With Chaos, as a method of teaching children how to read and write. Also examined are the learning strategies children develop as they attempt to solve the written language puzzle.

The authors stress that, "to facilitate the learning environment, in the classroom, teachers need to understand the strong relationships between the four language components: talking, listening, reading, and writing." Teachers also need to establish classrooms that surround their students with print as well as encourage children to take responsibility for many decisions about their learning.

This book effectively demonstrates that "process-oriented" classrooms are not the "chaos" they appear to be but highly structured, organized, and robust learning settings.

Sally Buttke

Cook, Jonathan and Peter Forrestal. Small Group Learning in the Classroom. Toronto: Irwin Publishing 1989. 7-8, 16-29.

Daily learning is predominantly social. Therefore, learning in the classroom is more effective when it is done in group communication.

Cook and Forrestal tell us that small group learning should be used along with teacher intervention. The teacher may interrupt group learning to introduce material or give instructions. This teacher involvement time is known as the "engagement stage." As students share ideas within their groups, they are involved in the stages of exploration and transformation. Work is presented by group members to an audience during the presentation stage. Finally, after individual grades are assigned, the students may reflect on their strengths and weaknesses during the reflection stage.

Britt Johnson

Dunning, Stephen and William Stafford. Getting the Knack: 20 Poetry Writing Exercises. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1992.

A simple, step-by-step approach to writing poetry is offered in twenty simple exercises. By using words found in newspaper headlines, letter formats, recipes, acrostics, and everyday forms of prose writing, the authors promise to help any novice learn to write poetry. The lessons progress from simple to more difficult forms such as syllable-count, dialogue, and imitation poems. Dream-writing exercises are sprinkled throughout the book, giving the reader opportunities to let his or her own ideas flow onto a page. This reader tried one of the exercises and was pleased with the resulting poem.

Karen Burnham

Hubert, Karen M. Teaching and Writing Popular Fiction: Horror, Adventure, Mystery, and Romance in the American Classroom. New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1983.

High school teachers are always looking for interesting and exciting methods to challenge students to write. Karen Hubert has found and described ways to introduce students to writing through what she labels as "The Genre Approach." In her book, she details this method as having the students read, tell, and listen to stories in each of the genres of horror, adventure, mystery and romance. After these activities are completed, the students are given a series of prompts, all included in her book, which serve as recipes for each student's use in developing a written story. In addition, Ms. Hubert discusses the

ways of tailoring each area of interest to the individual student. This is an excellent "how-to book," which should be on each high school writing teacher's bookshelf. 235pp.

Gary Davis

Goldberg, Natalie. Wild Mind: Living The Writer's Life. New York: Bantam, 1990.

Natalie Goldberg certainly does not use worn-out clichés when she classifies writers as either stalkers or dreamers (21-23). Stalkers use formulas and rules to create their works. Dreamers go by an inward vision that does not conform to rules. Goldberg believes that she is herself a dreamer. She advises others to decide which they are and accept that as right for them.

Her rules of writing are simple: keep your hand moving, be specific, lose control, don't think, don't worry about mechanics, remember that in America you are free to write the worst junk in America, and go for the jugular.(1-5) The book has several ideas for beginning and continuing writing. Her main message is "Just do it!"(44-45)

Robin Jennings

Jenson, George H. and John K. DiTiberio "The Evaluation of Writing." Personality and the Teaching of Composition . Norwood: Ablex, 1989.

When teachers disagree radically on what constitutes good writing, it leads to students' bewilderment and discontinuity in the writing process as students move from one teacher to the next. Jenson and DiTiberio argue that a teacher's personality type will affect how writing is evaluated, and their findings may be utilized to alert teachers of their biases and egocentric ways they respond to texts (134). Four personality types and their characteristics are identified: Extroversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving. An extroverted teacher tends to "value initiative," while an introverted teacher "value[s] reflection" (134). Sensing types tend to evaluate the "concrete text," while intuitive types evaluate the "concrete text in light of the inferences" made by the student (135). Thinking types "seem to value good content and organization over style," while the feeling types "value the more personal qualities of writing" with emphasis on style over content (137). Judging types "prefer writing that comes to a concise, definite conclusion, while perceiving types tend to value writing that "fully explore[s], rather than resolve[s], an issue" (139). The studies presented in this text suggest that teachers value and reward the writing of students whose personality type is similar to their own. These findings bring to light serious concerns for the reliability and validity of evaluating writing and question the credibility of composition pedagogy.

Connie Holmes

Juell, Pat. "The Course Journal." Roots in the Sawdust: Writing to Learn Across the Disciplines. Ed. Anne Ruggles Gere. Urbana: NCTE, 1985.

Juell opens her selection with the image of a greenhouse and uses the image to describe the essence of a journal in a write-to-learn class. She notes that the purpose for a journal when writing to learn is to allow students to develop new ideas rather than record existing ones. Over time, students learn to distinguish "seeds" for potential growth from distracting "weeds."

The selection contains three sections. The first discusses the importance of community building, or classroom trust, when writing to learn. The second contains tips and ideas, such as clustering, free writing, free association, and focused writing, for using the journal during the first five to ten minutes of each class period. Her final section describes a lesson developed from a sequence of journal assignments.

This selection is well organized and provides excellent details and examples when discussing classroom activities. Although written for secondary students, most activities could be modified for use with primary students. This is a notable reading choice for anyone interested in the use of journals or writing across the curriculum.

Rhonda Downer

Ledoux, Denis. Turning Memories Into Memoirs: A Handbook for Writing Lifestories. Lisbon Falls, Maine: Soleil Press, 1993.

Denis Ledoux focuses on the power of telling lifestories. This handbook is a guide for individuals to use as they bring their lifetime memories into a storytelling form. Ledoux presents ways to help individuals retrieve past memories and to generate new ones. He tells of a time when he only shared his stories and how they inspired others to want to create their own stories. The first chapters present the basis of storytelling and the steps to get started. The remainder of the selections is a complete guide used in Ledoux's workshops as a format for lifewriting. Throughout the selection, he also provides examples from previous workshops in which people wrote their own lifestories.

Traci Shaw

Nathenson-Mejia, Sally. "Writing in a Second Language: Negotiating Meaning Through Invented Spelling." Language Arts 66 (1989): 516-526.

Using the 1987 study of bilingual first-graders at the American School of Pueblo, Mexico, Nathenson-Mejia explains in detail why bilingual students invent spellings and why invented spellings are not something to be concerned with during the early stages of

reading and writing in English. She also provides samples of invented spellings and illustrations by the first-graders.

Nathenson-Mejia divides the invented spellings into six categories (English vs. Spanish): s vs. es, t/th vs. d, sh vs. ch, h vs. j, w vs. g, and vowels. This is a simple classification to which many more may be added. The study reveals that students' invented spellings decrease following exposure to reading and writing in both the native language and the second language.

Nathenson-Mejia reminds teachers that students need a good foundation of their native language in order to build upon it with a second language. They are trying to combine what they know with they do not know (hence, invented spellings appear), so, wherever possible, the students should be placed in a class where their native language is taught. For example, a Mexican student should take a Spanish course, in addition to his English course. Reading and writing in both languages gives students more opportunities to connect the two languages.

The most important message this article conveys is that teachers need to recognize students' attempts to make sense of two languages that they are learning. Nathenson-Mejia defines successful writing as "the creation of meaning and the communication of a message, not necessarily a perfectly written piece with no spelling errors or grammatical confusions." Everyone needs encouragement, especially when learning a language is at issue. Anyone who has a bilingual student in the classroom is encouraged to read this article.

Debbie Kipp

Pirie, David B. How To Write Critical Essays. New York: Methuen & Co., 1985.

This book is a detailed, step-by-step guide to developing critical essays. It is aimed primarily at students of literature; however, it is varied enough to be used in any subject field from secondary to postsecondary education. The book covers seven chapters which break down a critical essay into three essential phases: topic formation, rough draft guidelines, and revision practices. The first chapter, entitled "Facing The Question," is very creative in the ways it illustrates how an initial title can be decoded. The middle chapters reveal unique strategies for getting enough research material for turning a rough draft into an original copy. In addition, Pirie ends his work by reinforcing the idea that the "best" guideline is one that works for you.

Tonja McCurdy

Purves, Alan C., Joseph A. Quattrini, and Christine I. Sullivan. Creating the Writing Portfolio. Lincolnwood: NTC Publishing Group, 1995.

The authors explore and illustrate that portfolios are individual creations. Portfolios show the world the variety of things a person knows, can do, and has done. As an individual creation, a portfolio consists of an original designed cover, final proposals, and items in between.

The classroom portfolio is a student's self-portrait. It is important that students set their own goals and make their own plans for what they want to accomplish as a writer. At this point, the teacher will give supervision to individual students to determine goals that will be stated. The portfolio should focus on what a student knows, what they can do if put to the test, and what they can do on their own. The classroom portfolio should contain items which represent the student's best accomplishments. It should be looked upon as a personal statement and testimonial of a student's skills and interest. The portfolio should be filled with class assignments and free choice writings. Student's creations, comments, and reviews should also appear in their portfolio. Portfolios should highlight where students have been and where they want to go.

Rhonda Hammett

Rainer, Tristine. The New Diary: How to Use a Journal for Self-Guidance and Expanded Creativity. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1978.

Rainer's book offers a way of looking at diaries and journals as self-guiding and healing tools as well as devices for expanding creativity. Rainer believes a journal can help the reader solve personal problems, discover joy, overcome writing blocks, and expand creativity. Rainer's concept takes the traditional diary and transforms it beyond a date log. This book is a must for those who already keep a journal and for those who want to begin.

Ellen Lacey

Swain, Sherry S. I Can Write What's On My Mind: Theresa Finds Her Voice. Berkeley: National Writing Project, 1994.

Swain gives a day-by-day account of one child's experiences learning to read. She also explains her teaching methods which involve her reading to the child, the child's reading with her, and the child's reading independently. Theresa's parents are instrumental in Swain's study and in Theresa's progress. The author includes other student responses and achievements. Swain's ideas are innovative, and her study is extremely successful.

Barbara Wynn

Zinsser, William. "Writing Mathematics." Writing to Learn. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988.

Writing to Learn is William Zinsser's strongly written contention "that it's not necessary to be a 'writer' to write well." His chapter entitled "Writing Mathematics" successfully lives up to this quotation. Zinsser demonstrates that writing, thinking, and learning, regardless of subject matter, must become one process.

Cathy Green